MATT FRADD

THE PORN MYTH

Exposing the Reality Behind the Fantasy of Pornography

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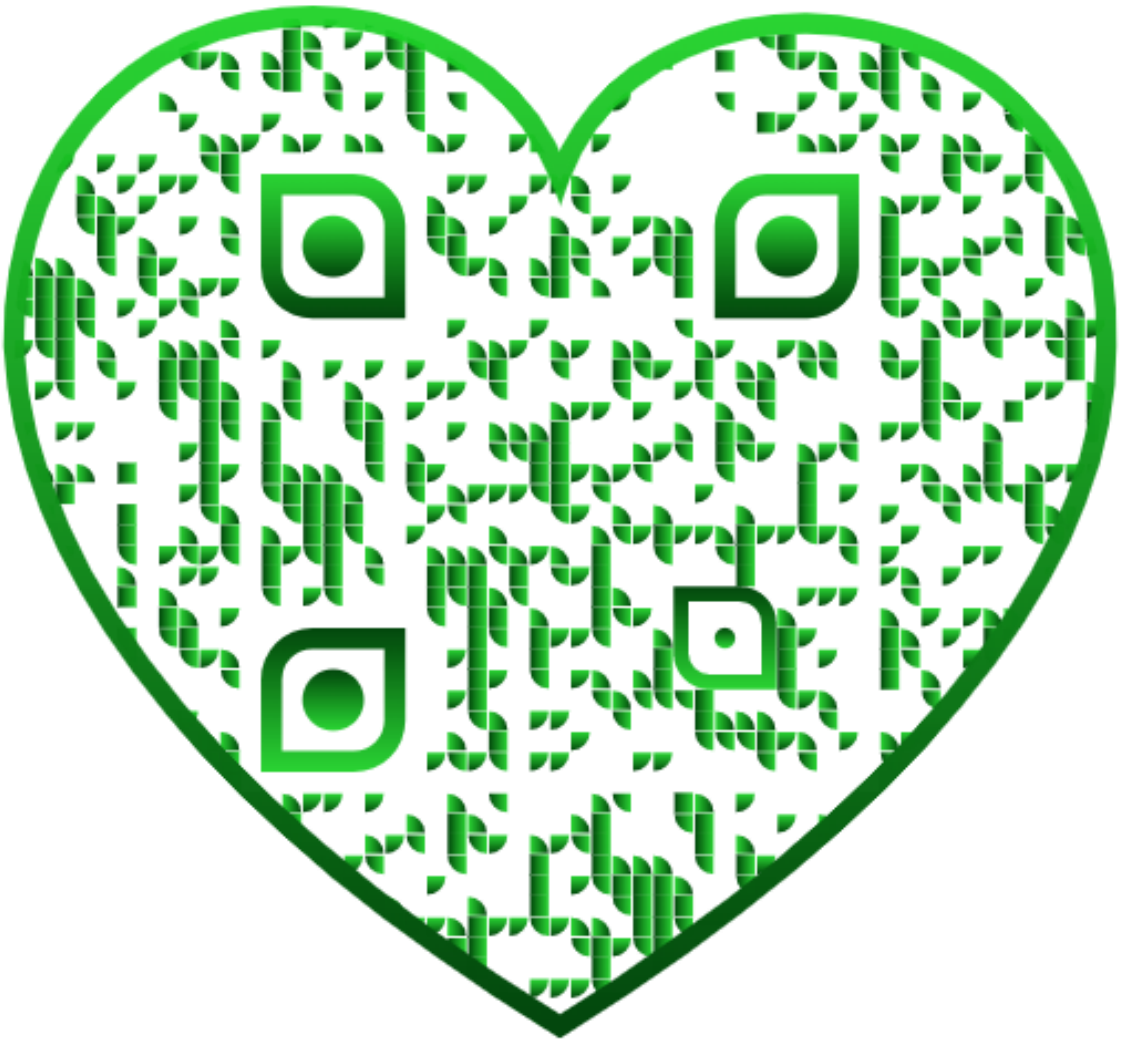

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Exposing the Reality Behind the
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FOREWORD

When I was ten years old, a friend and I were riding our bikes around our neighborhood one day, looking for something to do. We soon found ourselves behind a local gas station, where many neighborhood kids would often spend their afternoons because of its privacy and quick access to candy and soda. When we arrived that day, no one else was there. What happened next will forever be burned into my mind. I can still recall the vivid images over twenty years later.

My friend hopped off his bike and was pulled like a magnet toward a pile of magazines containing a seemingly endless number of images of nude women. My mind could hardly comprehend what it was consuming. I felt scared, excited, and a little confused.

Over the next several years, I found myself seeking out more of what I had seen, more often, and in more hardcore versions. Porn began to consume me, and it took me a long time to regain control and put it behind me.

What I experienced at ten years old was nothing compared with what youth are experiencing today. Not only has pornography become more accessible than at any other time in history, but its very nature has drastically changed from those magazines behind the gas station. Few things in our society are more concerning than pornography. Research is beginning to show just how harmful it is. We now know that pornography plays a role in sex trafficking, child exploitation, and sexual violence. Pornography also affects the developing brains of youth and shapes the sexual template of our entire society. We are seeing unprecedented levels of sexual dysfunction in many young men, and experts are attributing the trend to high levels of porn consumption.

Yet many of us have been duped into believing that pornography is healthy and normal. We've collectively adopted this myth and many others related to pornography (all of which are debunked in this book). As a result, the way we think and talk about topics such as sex, intimacy, and love has been warped, and our ability to form meaningful and fulfilling relationships with the opposite sex has been eroded. And that's putting it mildly.

Stating the case more strongly, countless relationships have been damaged or destroyed because of porn. Families have been torn apart. Lives have been consumed.

Pornography helped to land my cousin in jail in his early twenties. His pornography addiction was so severe that he eventually needed more than pixels to satisfy his cravings.

In college, seeing the impact of pornography led some friends and me to do some research. What we found shocked us. And we were angry that for much of our lives we and our peers had been led to believe that porn was just a harmless pastime.

This newfound knowledge would change the course of our lives. We felt a responsibility to help others to understand the truth about porn. We started the organization Fight the New Drug in an effort to educate youth about the harmful effects of pornography and to help them in their pursuit of real love.

Since then, we've received thousands upon thousands of e-mails from people all over the world, telling us their heartbreaking stories—stories that show just how damaging porn is, stories such as this one:

> I have been watching porn at least every day for the last 10 years. I am 23 years old. I got married when I was 21, and I still haven't had sex with my wife. Not because I don't want to, but because I can't. I can't stop watching porn, and I'm unable to become aroused enough to have sex with her. It has been two years, and I can see the pain in her eyes every time we try. I would do anything to change the last 10 years. I would do anything to choose love over porn. I want to love her with everything that I have, but my addiction to pornography has broken down our relationship to the point that we are now separated until I change or we agree on a divorce. I still haven't been aroused by anything other than pixels on a screen for years. I would do anything to go back and choose love.

We received this message from a teenager in high school:

> I'm addicted to porn. I watch it every single day. I've probably spent over 100 dollars on sex chats. I feel like I have no control over what I do. No matter how disciplined or "in control" I think I am, I always have porn on the back of my mind and I always want more. . . . This is no way to live. I've realized that and I want to change it. I *need* to change it.

The reality is that today's rising generation is dealing with this issue like no other generation before them. Porn's widespread acceptance and accessibility have evolved much faster than our public awareness of it. This topic has been pushed aside as a moral or religious one and therefore does not hold any weight in public health or public policy discussions.

Not anymore.

Thanks to new research on pornography's harmful effects on the brain, on relationships, and on society, we are seeing a wave of passionate individuals trying to change the cultural norm—inspiring others to pursue real love and to avoid its hollow counterfeit.

Our generation is ready for a new kind of love—a love that is untainted by

warped perceptions of intimacy and by selfish desires, a love that is unburdened by deflated interest and unhealthy compulsions. Millions are now recognizing pornography for what it is and rejecting its influence in their lives. This book is part of that movement.

The Porn Myth can help you not only to separate the myths from the reality about porn but also to reclaim real love. Matt Fradd masterfully articulates and dispels the falsehoods that have helped to spread porn addiction and sexual dysfunction, and he inspires us to take action against them.

But let's be realistic. Information is only the first step in changing a cultural norm: there is also a lot of work to do. But that's okay. We can do it. It has taken years for pornography to become widely accepted as a harmless pastime and a way of life, and it will take time and effort to reverse that public perspective. Are you up for it?

If so, read this book. Put into practice what you learn from it. Then share the message with others.

Clay Olsen, CEO and
Cofounder of Fight the New Drug

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INTRODUCTION

This book is about the myth that pornography is good and the many other falsehoods about pornography that many of us believe.

But before I get to those, a word about moths.

In 1869, in an attempt to spur a growing American silk industry, the entomologist Leopold Trouvelot made the big mistake of bringing the gypsy moth from Europe to Boston. Within ten years, swarms of gypsy moths were devastating forests with their voracious appetite. Attempts to eradicate this moth failed time and again, and for the next hundred years, it was an uncontrollable pest. Then, in the 1960s and ‘70s, scientists devised a new strategy. Biologists knew that the male gypsy moth found the female moth by following her scent—her pheromone. So scientists developed massive quantities of a synthetic version of this pheromone and scattered small pellets of it from the air over infested forests.

The effect was overpowering for the males. They were so overwhelmed by the highly concentrated pheromone that they either became confused and didn’t know where to turn to find the female or became desensitized to the lower levels of pheromone naturally produced by the female. Either way, the moths failed to reproduce themselves, and their population declined precipitously.

By way of analogy, this is what pornography is in our society: a synthetic, highly concentrated pheromone. Having been overexposed to it, many people are either confused about or disinterested in real sexual intimacy. As this book will show, all over the globe, people are reporting the ill effects of pornography—even those who have no moral qualms with it. From the findings of neuroscience to the clinical investigations of psychologists to the couches of licensed counselors, there are widespread concerns about pornography’s impact on our minds and on our culture. Pornography, says neurosurgeon Donald Hilton, is “a *visual pheromone*, a powerful 100 billion dollar per year brain drug that is changing human sexuality”.[1]

In a 2011 TED talk, psychologist Philip Zimbardo said that studies show a growing, widespread fear of intimacy and a social awkwardness among men—more and more men don’t know how to engage in face-to-face communication with women. Why? Zimbardo says this is caused by disproportionate Internet use in general and excessive new access to pornography in particular. “Boys’

brains are being digitally rewired in a totally new way, for change, novelty, excitement."[2]

Perhaps these quotes sound like gross overstatements. Porn as a brain drug? Digitally rewiring the mind? Sure, we think, pornography has a seedy side. Sure, some people can get carried away with it. Sure, there are probably some unsavory characters out there using it and making it. But why all the fuss about it? Porn is just consenting adults watching consenting adults have sex. Right?

What Is Porn? (Just So We're Clear)

Pornography can be notoriously difficult to define. Part of the reason for this is that different definitions of it have an impact on the sphere of lawmaking. If we define pornography too liberally, we might end up penalizing certain legitimate art forms. If we define pornography too narrowly, we might miss all the diversity in the pornographic landscape. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's now famous "I know it when I see it" definition, though humorously true to life, is not at all specific.

Perhaps a history lesson is in order here. The term "pornography" entered the English language in the mid-nineteenth century, meaning "writings or engravings of or about prostitutes". In some sense, pornography is therefore an extension of prostitution. The producers of pornography intend for the consumer to interact with the material as one interacts with a prostitute—it is a product that serves an erotic function.

Pornography, therefore, consists of visual materials containing explicit displays of sexual organs or sexual activities, whether real or simulated, in order to arouse erotic rather than aesthetic sensations. Or more briefly, pornography is material that depicts erotic behavior intended to cause sexual arousal.

Big Porn, Big Business

In some ways, I have to acknowledge that this book is about two decades too late. Sweeping cultural change is always possible, but given the current state of things, pornography is here to stay. Unless you've been living under a rock on a different planet, you probably already know that pornography use is common. And because it is so common, pornography is a huge industry, and it isn't going to go away any time soon.

It's hard to measure the revenue generated by porn. According to the Free

Speech Coalition, mainstream news sources have tried to estimate gross income totals for the porn industry, but exact figures are simply not available.[3] Still, we know that there's big money being made in porn. The porn industry generates $13 billion each year in the United States.[4] The old adage "sex sells" takes on an entirely new meaning when sex is your main product.

It is safe to say that porn is no longer the exception in entertainment but is the norm. In their exhaustive search of the one million most-trafficked websites in the world, neuroscientists Ogi Ogas and Sai Gaddam found that 42,337 of these are sex-related sites. After their analysis of the top 400 million web searches, researchers concluded that about one in eight searches is for erotic content.[5] Among millennials (18-to 30-year-olds), 63 percent of men and 21 percent of women say they view pornography at least *several times a week*—and that says nothing of those who view pornography somewhat less frequently.[6]

Internet-safety advocate Donna Rice Hughes succinctly states, "Online pornography is the first consistently successful e-commerce product."[7] A key factor in the growth of pornography is the growth of Internet technologies, which, because of the apparent anonymity of the World Wide Web, have made it easier for people to access porn without being seen by others. Because porn consumers are a large market segment, this has accelerated the development of media technologies, from file-sharing networks to streaming video to mobile video. Blaise Cronin and Elisabeth Davenport, writing for *Information Society*, say that it is universally acknowledged by information-technology experts that the porn industry has been on the "leading edge" when it comes to building high-performance websites.[8]

The porn industry's big players are multimillion-dollar giants—not just household names such as *Playboy* and *Hustler*, but Time Warner, Hilton, and Rupert Murdoch. Pornography is no longer driven by a few business-savvy culture changers willing to risk jail time for their sexually liberal beliefs. Stephen Yagielowicz, senior editor for *XBIZ*, comments:

> The corporatization of porn isn't something that will happen or is happening, it is something that happened—and if you're unaware of that fact then there truly is no longer a seat at the table for you. It's Las Vegas all over again: the independent owners, the renegade mobsters and visionary entrepreneurs pushed aside by mega-corporations that saw a better way of doing things and brought the discipline needed to attain a whole new level of success to the remaining players.[9]

To say pornography is big business is not to say it doesn't experience its own recessions. In 2007, *Bloomberg Businessweek* estimated global porn revenues at $20 billion, about half of that in the United States. But only five years later,

those revenues were estimated to have dropped by 50 percent, due to the easy accessibility of free pornography on the Internet.[10] Porn provider Alec Helmy says, “Consumer psychology has changed due to free porn.” Customers are reluctant to pay for pornographic content when they can get it free.[11] In other words, though porn profits are declining, this is not because pornography’s popularity is waning, but because the use of free pornography is ubiquitous.

This saturation of free porn in online spaces has required porn companies to get creative. Like any good marketers, “adult” businesses have a vested interest in studying the psychology of consumer behavior. Jack Morrison, writing for *Adult Video News*, says porn companies have sought the advice of clinicians who help people to overcome cyber-sex addictions on how to attract more customers to their websites. Companies that heed the advice have the potential to turn huge profits.[12]

Pornography is no longer a black market enterprise. Andrew Edmond, CEO of Flying Crocodile, a $20 million Internet porn company, stated, “A lot of people [outside the porn industry] get distracted from the business model by [the sex]. It is just as sophisticated and multilayered as any other marketplace. We operate just like any Fortune 500 company.”[13] Porn companies have their own investment firms; enter comarketing initiatives with other corporations; organize trade shows; undergo mergers and acquisitions; hire managers, janitors, and secretaries; and raise capital as any mainstream business does.

Big Porn makes big money, and for good reason: it plays to our strong desire for sexual pleasure.

What This Book Is Not

Lest I be misunderstood, the purpose of this book is not to rob us of the pleasure of our sexuality but instead to insist that perhaps sex can be *more* pleasurable when it isn’t on tap or made-to-order. If you are an avid porn consumer and have never given a moment’s thought to whether it is good or bad, right or wrong, my objective here is not to condemn you. Though I won’t flinch in saying your mentality about pornography is wrong, your desire for sexual fulfillment is rooted in something very good. We all want our lives to flourish, and it is my contention that, as a society, we can do a whole lot better with respect to our sexuality than what porn offers us.

This book is also not a religious treatise on the evils of pornography. Everyone has ideas about ultimate reality, and I am no exception. While I have my own assumptions about how human beings flourish, just as you do, this book

will not lean on traditional religious scriptures or authorities.

Furthermore, this book is not about censorship, nor does it argue against the legality of pornography. We live in a global economy, and pornography is consumed in every nation on the planet. National laws, judicial systems, and regulatory agencies tend to move far more slowly than the rapid acceleration of technology, and I have no brilliant ideas about how to change that. Time and space simply do not permit a treatment of a legal subject so vast and complex. Plus, in my opinion, some versions of censoring pornography seem a lot like prohibition laws in America in the 1920s, unnecessarily turning relatively normal citizens into criminals, and that is not my intention here. Laws are important, of course, but my aim here is to challenge our mentalities about porn. The assertion I'm making in this book is not whether porn should be denied as a form of protected free speech—though that *is* worth debating—but, rather, whether porn is a form of expression deserving of tough criticism.

What This Book Is

The goal of this book is to expose the myth that pornography is good or at least not that bad. Along the way it will debunk the most commonly held beliefs about pornography, either explicitly stated or implicitly understood.

This book covers a wide range of topics—from the porn industry itself to the impact of porn on our physiology and our relationships. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. At first glance, this book might appear to be saying that pornography *can be* a problem, that there are certain consequences to the *abuse* of porn, that porn is morally neutral—like a gun, which can be used for good or for evil. The argument of this book, however, is something altogether different.

Myths about porn exist largely because they make pornography more acceptable. For those who hold to more traditional values, belief in some of these myths amounts to defeat: "The age of porn has come," they say, "and there's nothing we can do to free ourselves from its iron grip." For those who hold to more liberal values, belief in many of these myths justifies the use of porn, enabling their consciences to turn a blind eye to its essential nature.

This book rests on one fundamental presupposition: if you want something to flourish, you need to use it in accordance with its nature. Don't plant tomatoes in a dark closet and water them with soda and expect to have vibrant tomato plants. To do so would be to act contrary to the nature of tomatoes. Similarly, don't rip sex out of its obvious relational context, turn it into a commodity, and then expect individuals, families, and society to flourish.

If we become a civilization that sells people, a civilization that takes something so central to who we are as persons—our sexuality—and industrializes it, we cannot be happy people.

Yet this is what we have become. We live in an age of commercial sex in which bodies are bought and sold, both physically and virtually. Melissa Farley, director of Prostitution Research and Education, said that while doing research about men who buy sex, her team had a difficult time locating men who don't do so. The use of pornography, phone sex, lap dances, and other services has become so widespread that Farley's team had to *loosen* their definition of a non-sex buyer in order to assemble a hundred-person control group for their research.[14]

The Purpose of Sex

It has been said—and I agree—that the real problem with pornography isn't that it shows *too much* but that it shows *too little*. Too little of what? Too little of the human person. Porn treats sex one-dimensionally, by reducing people to their sexual organs, and then uses them as a mere means to an end. As a result, it cannot offer the experience of real intimacy that we long for.

Among mammals, monogamy is rare, but human beings are unique in that we are wired for pair bonding. Dr. Larry J. Young, professor of psychiatry at Emory University School of Medicine, says the human species is rather curious in that "we form long-lasting selective social bonds between mates in addition to the parent-child bond resulting in the nuclear family." This, he says, is undoubtedly "rooted in our biology and genetic heritage".[15]

Thanks to advances in the biological sciences, and especially in neurology, we know that the neurochemicals oxytocin and vasopressin are among the key players in our bodies for creating feelings of strong attachment. For instance, oxytocin is released in a woman's body during childbirth and breast-feeding, contributing to a strong bond between mother and infant. In human beings, these neurochemicals are released slowly during lovemaking and in large quantities during orgasm, neurologically "bonding" a person's memories to the source of sexual pleasure.

Even an artificial boost of oxytocin has this impact. The *Journal of Neuroscience* released the results of a study in which men were given either a dose of oxytocin (via a nasal spray) or a placebo and then placed in close proximity to an attractive female. The results were interesting. Men who received the oxytocin and were also in committed relationships chose to put

extra space between themselves and the women they had just met. Men who received the placebo or were not in committed relationships did not opt for the extra distance. This was true even when a monogamous man was shown a *photo* of the same attractive woman: he put distance between himself and her likeness.[16]

Paul Zak, founding director of Claremont Graduate University's Center for Neuroeconomics Studies, says that these findings suggest something important about the ways in which the human brain differs from the brains of animals: we are built for long-term romantic relationships. These neurochemicals are meant for forging long-lasting romantic bonds. "Hugh Hefner is the exception, not the role model for men."[17]

Human beings are sexually unique from all other creatures on earth in a key respect: because our brains have an expanded cerebral cortex, we can consciously choose to enhance our feelings of connectedness to our mates through simple activities. Smiling, eye contact, verbal compliments, skin-to-skin contact, listening, helping, cuddling, hugging, kissing, and, of course, sexual intercourse—these and other similar activities actually jump-start our brain's love machinery. By making a choice to engage in these activities, we can trigger a constant release of bonding hormones and transmitters.[18]

This bonding, plus the biological purpose of procreation, is the purpose of our sexual drive—it is our sexual nature. To use our sexual desires in a way contrary to this is to do violence to others and to ourselves.

The Pleasure of Porn

The chemicals released in our brains as the result of sexual activity can have a similar but twisted effect when they are stimulated by pornography. Neuroscientist William Struthers writes, "With repeated sexual acting out in the absence of a partner, a man will be bound and attached to the image and not a person."[19] Behavioral therapist Andrea Kuszewski says porn can trigger the release of neurochemicals just as sex can, bonding a person to the endless novelty of pornography, "and those chemicals make you want to keep coming back to have that feeling." We can, in essence, wed ourselves to porn.[20]

Our ever-deepening examination of the human mind shows us that healthy sexual desire is not just a desire for a particular kind of pleasure in the sexual organs. This reduces sex to mutual masturbation, in which the other person is seen merely as a stimulus to desire and not another person whom I desire. British

philosopher of aesthetics Roger Scruton says pornography is founded on this growing myth in our culture, what he calls an "instrumentalized conception of sexual conduct", in which others are merely a means to an experience.[21]

This is why porn falls woefully short of sex as we are wired to experience it. In bonding with a real person in the act of sex, there is at least the potential to treat sex as a self-gift to another, not merely as a selfish act.

Perhaps you think I am assuming nothing but a noble fiction, but many of us would—I would hope—agree that the world is a better place when we treat others not merely as things to gratify ourselves but as persons to be valued. To quote Saint John Paul II, "the person is a good towards which the only proper and adequate attitude is love."[22] Either we agree with this, or we do not. If we disagree—if people can rightly be objectified, used, and discarded—then perhaps there is nothing essentially wrong with porn after all.

It is my contention that what sets human beings apart from animals is that, while we have survival instincts, we can choose how we behave because of our supremely unique brains and bodies. Unlike other creatures, we can speak of rights and duties, we can experience self-consciousness, distinguishing between the self and the other, and we can reflect on our past and our future. With men and women, sex can become a free, total, and faithful self-gift.

Celebrating the Human Body

Anthony Esolen, professor of English at Providence College, said that because human beings are higher life forms than animals, the human body deserves a higher regard. Unlike animals, human beings have both a physical body and a nonphysical soul, which means they are capable of thought, imagination, and freedom of will. As part of the human person, the body is worthy of the same reverence due to the person. Thus, Esolen says, "It is a contradiction to say, 'I honor the human person,' while treating the human body as separable from the person, using it as a tool, devouring [pornographic] images of it. . . . One cannot at once love the beautiful and desire to defile it."[23]

Those of us who oppose porn's objectification of human beings are not opposing sexual expression. We stand against pornography in order to stand for the honor of the human person. Anytime we capture the image of another—be it for artistic purposes or for entertainment—the display of that image should lead others to celebrate the mystery and the depth of humanity, not encourage them to treat the person as a cheap assembly of body parts.

If you agree with the above statement or are at least open to the possibility of

agreeing with it, read on. This book will now debunk all of the beliefs that cloud the truth about porn. Along the way, it will provide plenty of statistics, anecdotes, and arguments that will help to prove that porn is not a harmless pastime.

PORN CULTURE

1. Porn is just “adult” entertainment.

A hundred years ago in England, if you said you were going to a gentlemen’s club, it was understood that you were going to a private upper-class establishment where you could relax, read, play parlor games, dine, and gossip with others of your class. Today in the United States, if you say you are going to a gentlemen’s club, it is assumed that you will be paying to see a striptease in a low-lit bar that smells like urinals and hopelessness.

Likewise, fifty years ago, if you said you were going to the adult section of the public library, it was understood that you were looking for works by Agatha Christie, perhaps, or by John Steinbeck. Today people would assume you were looking for something pornographic.

Pornography is often classified as “adult” entertainment—something for “mature” audiences—as if this form of entertainment were merely “not suitable for children”.

The truth is, pornography isn’t suitable for adults either. Heroin is also “not suitable for children”, but this does not mean, ipso facto, that it is healthy for those over the age of eighteen.

Porn advocates are fond of saying—“fond” is an understatement; they repeat it like a mantra—that pornography is sophisticated entertainment for responsible adults. Porn, they will have you believe, is what those with mature tastes appreciate—like Scotch and Dostoyevsky. As porn actor and filmmaker Ron Jeremy is quick to say: “Pornography is consensual sex between consenting adults, to be watched by consenting adults.”[1]

This leads us to ask: What exactly constitutes an “adult” or a “mature” person? Do these words refer merely to one’s age, as in, at least eighteen, the legal age of maturity?

One way we use the term “mature” is when talking about reaching a final or desired state. We speak of “mature wine” as wine that has reached its peak fermentation and is ready to be consumed. We also use the word “mature” to speak of those who have “grown up” in their behaviors and attitudes—they no longer display the impetuousness and naivety of youth. The patrons of strip clubs call these establishments “gentlemen’s clubs” to imply that the activities there are manly, not boyish.

Ask any neuroscientist what a mature human brain looks like, and he will

likely mention a region of the brain known as the prefrontal cortex. It is directly behind the forehead and serves as the managerial center of the brain. It is responsible for our willpower; it regulates our behavior by making decisions based on judgments about good and bad, better and best, and so forth. When emotions, impulses, and urges surge from the midbrain, the lobes in the prefrontal cortex exercise executive control over them. By the age of twenty-five, this region of the brain reaches maturity, meaning that, by that age, thinking becomes more sophisticated and regulating emotions becomes easier.

Why bring neuroscience into the equation? Because fascinating research is being done by looking at the impact that porn has on this region of the brain.[2]

As the brain responds to sexual stimulation, surges of dopamine are released during sexual encounters (including pornographic stimulation) giving the person a sharp sense of focus and an awareness of sexual craving. Dopamine helps to lay down memories in the brain, so that the next time a man or woman is in the mood, the brain remembers where to return to experience sexual pleasure: whether that is a lover or the laptop in the den.

But scientists are now seeing that continued exposure to porn gives the brain an unnatural high—beyond what it is wired to handle—and the brain eventually fatigues. Anatomy and physiology instructor Gary Wilson notes that drug abuse causes the same phenomenon: the brain becomes desensitized.[3] More of the drug or harder drugs are then needed to get the same high, and the downward spiral of addiction begins. Wilson says that chemical over-stimulation brings about significant changes in the brain—both for drug abusers and for porn users.[4]

One of those changes is the erosion of the prefrontal cortex—that all-important center of executive control. Neurosurgeon Donald Hilton explained what scientists are seeing in their research. A study on cocaine addiction, published in 2002, showed shrinkage in several areas of the brain, particularly the frontal control areas, among cocaine users. A study from 2004 showed very similar results for methamphetamine addicts. “But we expect drugs to damage the brain,” Hilton said, “so these studies don’t really surprise us.” What did surprise researchers, he said, was to find the same results for overeating that leads to obesity. A study published in 2006 found in obese people shrinkage in the frontal lobes very similar to that found in cocaine and methamphetamine addicts. A study published in 2007 discovered the same kind of brain damage in persons who exhibited severe sexual addiction. “So we have four studies, two drug and two natural addiction studies, all done in different academic institutions by different research teams, and published over a five-year period in four different peer-reviewed scientific journals. And all four studies show that

addictions physically affect the frontal lobes of the brain."[5]

If the frontal lobes of the brain are weakened, when the craving for porn hits, there is very little willpower present to regulate the desire. Neuroscientists call this problem *hypofrontality*, in which the person slowly loses impulse control and mastery of his passions.[6] The point is this: the region in the brain that, when mature, is the mark of adulthood is the very thing that is eroded as people view porn. It is as if viewing porn makes the brain revert and become more childish. "Adult" entertainment is actually making people more juvenile.

The attempt to make sexual deviancy appear gentlemanly seems to be nothing more than the attempt of weak men to justify shameful behavior. Since the very first issue of *Playboy* hit the magazine racks in 1953, Hugh Hefner's strategy was twofold: to distributors he would market the magazine as soft-core porn, but to the target audience he would market it as a "lifestyle magazine" for upwardly mobile men. This began the cultural change in porn's public image:

> [W]hen the editors addressed the reader, the pictures were just one of many attractions, rather than *the* attraction. The reader was invited not to masturbate to the centerfold but rather to enter the world of the cultural elite, to discuss philosophy and consume food associated with the upper middle class. . . . The markers of upper-class life, which appear causally thrown in as afterthoughts (cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, and Picasso), were deliberately placed to cloak the magazine in an aura of upper-middle class respectability. Just as *Playboy* would have died without the naked women lining its pages, so it also would have died without its articles and advertisements, which gave permission to the self-defined middle-class American male to indulge in porn.[7]

Why is it that adult stores offer back entrances? Is it because their clientele are misunderstood revolutionaries who are plotting the demise of a sexually repressed society? Or is it much simpler than that: Is it because they know that such behavior is shameful?

Which activity sounds more "mature" and grown-up: making love for a lifetime to one real flesh-and-blood woman whom you are eagerly serving and cherishing, despite all her faults and blemishes (and despite your own), or sneaking away at night to troll the Internet, flipping from image to image, from one thirty-second teaser to another, for hours on end, pleasuring yourself as you bond to pixels on a screen?

No, indulging in pornographic media and other forms of commercial sex are hardly befitting of the adjective "adult". Actions speak louder than words—even when those words are five-feet-high, neon, and say, "Gentlemen's Club".

2. To be anti-porn is to be anti-sex.

The 1980s saw the birth of the term “sex-positive feminism”. In the days before porn was ubiquitously available through Wi-Fi, broadband networks, and 4G, the dialogue about porn started to change in the feminist community. “Sex-positive feminism” emerged as a reaction to anti-porn sentiments that were common among some feminists.

Ellen Willis, the author who coined the term “sex-positive feminism”, reflects on the genesis of the idea: “We took on the anti-pornography movement, which had dominated the feminist conversation about sex: As we saw it, the claim that ‘pornography is violence against women’ was code for the neo-Victorian idea that men want sex and women endure it.”[1] In other words, feminists who were against porn had gotten into bed with the patriarchal prudes who put women in a subservient place to begin with. In essence, to be against porn is to tell women, “You shouldn’t be like these women in porn—women who portray characters that enjoy sex. Shame, shame.” To be against porn, they say, is to play into the hands of a patriarchal culture that tells women that they live in a man’s world and that sex is a man’s thing.

More recently the now-famous Duke University porn star, Belle Knox (her real name is Miriam Weeks), expressed similar sentiments in various interviews after her identity became public knowledge.

> The way I see it, there is an unfortunate and significant schism in our movement between the sex negative feminists—women who believe that sex, especially pornography, is degrading and imbued with power struggles—and sex positive, pro-kink, pro-fetish feminists—women like me who believe that sexual liberation is paramount to achieving progress and equality.[2]

In other words, what separates her from the anti-porn crowd (other than her actual stardom in porn) is that she thinks pornography is empowering to women because it boldly claims that sex—even rough, female-dominating sex—is something both men and women can enjoy. To say otherwise is to be, in her words, “sex negative”.

Admittedly, I do not share Ms. Knox’ enjoyment of what she calls “pro-kink” material, but regardless of my personal sexual tastes or yours, what actually takes place in these films is nothing short of frightening. To get inventive in the bedroom with your lover is one thing; to film yourself being slapped and gagged

by men who take great pleasure in abusing someone for the camera is another altogether.

The key issue before us is not my personal tastes or Knox' personal tastes in sexual pleasure. The issue is whether we can speak out against pornography as a degrading medium and not be anti-sex. With all due respect to Ms. Knox, I believe it is clear: she is not *fighting* the sexually repressive patriarchy by letting millions masturbate to a film of men abusing her. She is playing to them.

Saying that we need porn to avoid sexual repression is like saying that we need gluttony to avoid anorexia. Pornography is as much a celebration of sex as gluttony is a celebration of food. In both instances, that which should be appreciated isn't appreciated at all but is twisted into something unhealthy and dangerous. By placing sex—any kind of sex—into the medium of pornography, we gorge the masses on industrialized, commodified sexuality. This does not celebrate sex at all. It cheapens it.

It might be easy to dismiss women like Belle Knox because of the sensationalism of her story, so I'll use a tamer example to illustrate my point.

When journalism professor Robert Jensen of the University of Texas visited the 2008 Adult Entertainment Expo (AEE) in Las Vegas, amid the myriad of porn-company booths, he happened upon the purveyors of an Australian website that bills itself as "real, passionate, unscripted" sexual activity by "happy, healthy, regular girls in their normal environments". No makeup, no fake boobs, no airbrushing—just "an endless bounty of gasping sex, stunning beauty, and friendly faces". This is girl-next-door porn, and it was clear from the crowds around the booth that it was able to hold its own amid the sea of sexual choices.

It was equally clear to Jensen that these women were different. They didn't have the caricatured porn-star look—no surgically enhanced bodies, impossibly high heels, or over-the-top makeup. They chatted with the fans, even played chess with some of them (to show that they are smart as well as sexy). They looked like ordinary women.

Jensen interviewed several of the women and heard a similar story each time: they are comfortable with their bodies, confident in their sexuality, and proud to be taking control of how they are represented in the porn industry.

Jensen began engaging the women in friendly debates. He asked them how selling images mostly used by men for masturbation advances the interests of women. How does that improve the lot of women in the world? Jensen said that each of the conversations ended with an agree-to-disagree parting, and he went off to other parts of the convention. The next day, the girl-next-door photographer told Jensen that these conversations had upset some of the women. She said, "These are smart women who've made a decision to perform, and we'd

like you to respect that." Jensen replied that it was precisely *because* he respects these women and views them as intelligent adults that he had engaged them in a respectful way. What could be wrong with that? The photographer responded that they wanted to avoid "intellectual sparring".

Jensen complied. After all, this was a convention set up to market porn films, not to engage in debates about porn's merits. Jensen stepped back and simply observed.

> A few hours after we were banned from interviewing the girls it was show time at the. . . booth, with four female couples kissing and caressing for the overwhelmingly male audience. In that moment the connection between these Australian women and the rest of the AEE convention was clear. Just as at the other companies on the floor, men with all varieties of cameras and cell phones ringed the booth, vying for the best angles to record images of women being sexual. [These] women looked different from the porn-star caricature, but their girl / girl action (the industry's term for lesbian sex presented for a male audience) didn't look much different from the industry norm, and the men who were watching behaved the same as other fans on the convention floor.
>
> That moment provides an important reminder: Pornography, at its core, is a market transaction in which women's bodies and sexuality are offered to male consumers in the interests of maximizing profit. Market niches vary, but the bottom line does not. In the end, it's about attracting the most "wankers" possible. Some of those men who wank to these images like porn-star caricatures. Some like the girl next door.[3]

At its core, modern pornography is an industry. It is about the commodification of bodies for revenue. And it is precisely because I'm *for* sex that I'm against porn. Whether we're talking about misogynist women-hating porn or the gentle girl-on-girl variety, it is pornography as a *medium* that is the main problem. Porn is the business of presenting women's bodies to men for masturbation. To stand against this is not to stand against sex generally but to stand against a habit of solo sex that turns men into consumers, not lovers.

3. Porn empowers women.

Betty Dodson is, in many ways, a woman ahead of her time. Since the 1970s, Ms. Dodson has hosted many workshops in which she teaches small groups of women how to masturbate. Her first book, *Liberating Masturbation: A Meditation on Selflove,* is now a feminist classic.

As you might expect, Dodson has her own opinions about porn. While she doesn't want to see children exposed to porn, and she doesn't think porn offers the best in sexual education, in the end she believes that porn is "just an extension of accepting masturbation as the best relief for the socially imposed monotony of monogamy". She would prefer that men generate their own mental fantasies, but she finds nothing wrong with masturbating to porn on occasion. In a culture where you are shamed into believing that sexual pleasure outside of a committed relationship is wrong, she says, porn just might be the best escape.[1]

Porn, says Dodson, is not just entertainment for men; it can also empower women because of its ability to challenge the norms of our society that would control a woman's sexual freedom:

> The idea of reclaiming women's sexual power by creating pornography was a heady concept. Feminists could restore historical perspectives on the ancient temple priestesses of Egypt, the sacred prostitutes, the Amazons of Lesbos, and the royal courtesans of the Sumerian palaces. . . . In order for women to progress, we must question all authority, be willing to challenge any rule aimed at controlling our sexual behavior, and avoid doing business as usual, thereby maintaining the status quo.[2]

This is the theory of female empowerment through pornography: certain women willingly and joyfully participating in porn are the new high priestesses of female liberation. These women help us to throw off the shackles of gender norms that tell women what is off limits is too perverted, too pleasurable, or too degrading.

In one sense, Dodson is onto something here. One can easily find spokeswomen for the porn industry—producers, business owners, and performers—who say they have loved their work and have done so with their heads held high. In one sense, these women are empowered: they have more money and social influence than men like me who write anti-porn books. On the other hand, however, one sees that these women are feeding the very systems

that *rob* women, as a group, of power.

Unfortunately, this use of "empowerment" is possible only by redefining the word. This abuse of language is the backbone of the new wave of feminism: "Feminism is something individual to each feminist."[3] This sort of hyperindividualism requires us to legitimize any woman who enjoys the so-called empowerment of pornography while ignoring all of the women who do not.

Ask the millions of women whose husbands habitually turn to porn. Do these women feel empowered by pornography? Dr. Jill Manning, a marriage and family therapist, notes that North American women live in psychologically split times. On one hand, they have dared to believe the modern rhetoric that relationships should be founded on mutual respect, honesty, shared power, and romantic love. On the other hand, pornography involves the exact opposite: disrespect, dissimulation, power imbalances, and detachment.

> Consequently when a North American woman discovers her spouse is using and viewing pornography secretly, it is not only devastating to her sense of self as a woman, and her sense of trust, but it can threaten the very foundation upon which she has constructed her relational world—not just with her spouse, but the larger world around her. Moreover, she is suddenly confronted with just how psychologically split her so-called "modern man" is.[4]

In a word, the discovery of a husband's use of porn can be completely demoralizing. Furthermore, as men try to bring what they learn from porn into the bedroom, they can often be blind to just how painful or distressing porn sex is in real life. Pornography doesn't just ramp up a man's sex drive; it discourages empathy.[5] When a porn consumer can't see the degradation in the porn he consumes, this only goes to show how caught up in his own pleasure he really is.

As Robert Jensen puts it, "To see the woman as a person deserving of respect—to see her as fully human—would interfere with getting it up and getting it off."[6]

In a similar vein, ask the millions of young women who live in a culture surrounded by men and boys who have grown up on pornographic sexual standards. Do these women feel "empowered" by pornography? Naomi Wolf, author of the international best seller *The Beauty Myth*, relates her own experiences of speaking to young adults today:

> Here is what young women tell me on college campuses when the subject comes up: They can't compete, and they know it. For how can a real woman—with pores and her own breasts and even sexual needs of her own (let alone with speech that goes beyond "More, more, you big stud!")—possibly compete with a cybervision of perfection, downloadable and extinguishable at will, who comes, so to speak, utterly submissive and tailored to the consumer's least specification?

> For most of human history, erotic images have been reflections of, or celebrations of, or substitutes for, real naked women. For the first time in human history, the images' power and allure have supplanted that of real naked women. Today, real naked women are just bad porn.[7]

These are not merely the experiences of a cluster of frigid, unimaginative women who need to lighten up. Porn shapes a person's concept of beauty. French neuroscientist Serge Stoleru reports that overexposure to erotic stimuli actually *exhausts* a healthy young man's sexual responses—making him, in a sense, *impotent* without the use of fantasy.[8] The *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* found similar results. When men and women were exposed to pictures of female centerfold models from *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, this significantly lowered their judgments about the attractiveness of "average" people.[9] Pornography literally changes our standard of beauty.

Of course, some modern women have no problem with the porn used by the men they date or marry, but when we peel back the veil, we learn the reasons why. Dr. Ana Bridges of the University of Arkansas has interviewed many women who are okay with their husbands' behavior. "All guys look at porn," they often say, "which is better than his having an affair." "At least he's not always coming to me to get his needs met." These are not sentiments from women who feel empowered by pornographic media, but, Dr. Bridges states, they are *rationalizations*. These are *permission-giving beliefs*: ideas that make certain behaviors seem normal or healthy.[10] Ironically, it is pornography that often teaches and reinforces these beliefs in the first place. If we receive a steady diet of media that portray illicit sex as the norm, it is easy to get the impression that "boys will be boys."

Finally, of course, we should turn our attention to the porn actresses themselves. Do they feel "empowered" by the work they do?

Miriam Weeks, known as Belle Knox in the industry, says that she loves the work she does, that the industry has enabled her to build a name for herself, build a brand around her name, and pay her way through college at Duke University. She has reached a level of stardom that many porn stars only dream about. She is, in many ways, empowered by porn.

At the same time, in a recent documentary, Knox has said that the industry has a way of making her very cynical and bitter. She always has to be on the lookout for scammers who will try to pimp or traffic her. She has to endure the physical rigors, often painful, of sex for hours on end. She has had to endure sex with men she finds repulsive, men she chooses to have sex with out of "professionalism". She also says she's at risk of really losing herself and becoming her Belle Knox alter ego.[11]

Perhaps no woman has made it as big in the porn industry as Jenna Jameson. She has won multiple adult-film awards and is the founder of ClubJenna, a pornographic website that pulled in $30 million per year before it was purchased by Playboy Enterprises.[12] Her book, *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star*, spent more than six weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list.

While Jameson has repeatedly defended her involvement in the porn industry, one only needs to read her own words to see the kind of empowerment she has experienced. In her book *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star*, she describes a discovery she made during a dancing tour with Wicked Pictures: one evening at a bikini bar, she looked around the room and realized, "These guys didn't care about seeing a show. They just wanted to see some skin. So much for my delusion of actually being respected in the world at large."[13]

Her book reveals that such reflections do not come easily:

> Travel is a major staple of my life. It seems it's all I do. I'm not sure the effect it's having on me. I guess I haven't taken the time to reflect. Obviously that's one of the major problems. Reflection. I close myself off. Not wanting to let what's in the mirror of my life stare back at me. I never take the time to feel the effects of my choices. Maybe it's because I would be ashamed, maybe afraid. I realize I have avoided my pain for as long as I can remember. . . . As life goes racing by me, all the while my soul goes on with sickness. Yes, sickness. It feels like it's ailing. Because the one that should be nursing it is too busy trying to succeed and be accepted. I'm certainly scared that if I try to fix what has broken in me, so long ago, I may not succeed. So I go on faking that I am whole, proud, and strong. . . . I almost laughed aloud when I turned my head down to wipe my tears on my shirt and saw the pen I was pouring my pain through. It's a Radisson Hotel pen. Point taken.[14]

Are these the words of an empowered woman? No. This woman is frightened, insecure, and desperately trying to escape the traumas of her life.

Retired from full-time porn work (though she still does webcam modeling), Jameson is now the mother of two boys. In an interview, Anderson Cooper asked her what she would do if she ever had a daughter who wanted to get into porn. "I'd tie her in the closet," she replied, "only because this is such a hard industry for a woman to get ahead and get the respect that she deserves. I fought tooth and nail to get to where I am, and it's not something that I would want my daughter to go through. It's not something that any parent would choose for their child."[15]

Why does the Queen of Porn think the industry is a hard place for a woman to find respect? Because the entire industry is built on the premise that women are meant to be used for male pleasure. How can such an industry truly empower its hardest workers?

So, in review, are there individual women in the world who feel empowered by porn? Sure. Does this mean that porn is empowering to women as a group?

No. Rather, the opposite is true. Feminist author Gail Dines eloquently explains the critical difference:

> In radical feminism we don't talk about empowerment of the individual but rather collective liberation for women as a class. We say that as long as one woman is being oppressed then our job is to fight for her. We don't see more sex or better orgasms as the answer to women's oppression. What we want is the end of a system where women are the majority of the world's poor, hungry, illiterate, overworked and raped. Our bodies are commodified to the point that you can buy and sell a woman over and over again. For radical feminists only massive structural change will do.[16]

"Feminist pornography" is an oxymoron. Working for an industry that uses your body to make a buck can only feed a system of oppression. All the talk about female empowerment is just the new face of porn PR.

4. There is no difference between porn and naked art.

In 1969 Marvin Miller made $10 million by printing and shipping pornographic books. He had one hard-and-fast rule for his fifty employees: no free samples. Black market porn is bad for business.

Miller was among a select few in the Los Angeles porn trade doing business in the millions in the 1960s. He claimed that 15 percent of the people to whom he mailed advertisements bought something from him—an astonishing percentage for mail order.

His profits did not come without a personal cost, though. In the first several years of his business, he was arrested thirty times on charges of mailing "obscene" material. In 1968 alone, his legal expenses topped $200,000. His mailed advertisements often contained images from his books, images of naked women in provocative poses, and occasionally some were mailed directly to minors.

In court Miller claimed that his books had "redeeming social value"—carefully chosen words, as they echoed the 1957 Supreme Court ruling in *Roth v. United States*. This case had redefined what was deemed "obscene" material and therefore not protected by First Amendment rights. After the court's decision, pornographers could lace their magazines and books with story lines—no matter how thin—a nd claim that their otherwise racy picture books had social value. Still, local communities and law enforcement brought men like Miller to court on obscenity charges.[1]

Marvin Miller's legal defense highlights the thin line between pornography and "erotica" or "nude art". Intuition tells many people that there are differences, but trying to pin down those differences has been notoriously difficult for lawmakers and art critics alike.

Pornographers often speak of their work as being in the cultural continuum of erotic art. Porn has been around since the beginning of time, they say, and will never go away. They appeal to antiquity, noting that some of the most celebrated works of classic art feature nudity. The Renaissance celebrated this heritage; thus Michelangelo's *David* is nude, and so are many of his painted figures in the Sistine Chapel.

So what's the difference between pornography and naked art?

First, they are different in their very definitions. The word "pornography"

contains the Greek root *porne*, meaning “prostitution” or “prostitute”. Like prostitution, pornography has a specific desired end: sexual stimulation in order to produce a completed sexual act. True art is not produced for this purpose, to substitute for a prostitute. True artists aim at capturing their vision of beauty in order that the beautiful might be apprehended and appreciated.

A porn director would be puzzled or even disappointed if someone who watched one of his X-rated flicks told him, “The film was beautiful, but it didn’t get me off; I didn’t find it all that sexually arousing.” Michelangelo, on the other hand, would most likely have been disturbed if someone told him that his paintings in the Sistine Chapel did little to arouse wonder but sure did turn him on. The difference between a pornographer and an artist lies in his intentions.

Jerrold Levinson, professor of philosophy at the University of Maryland and an expert in aesthetics, says that art and pornography can both induce sexual interest, but pornography is made exclusively for the purpose of causing sexual stimulation. Porn makers intend to bring people into “the physiological state that is prelude and prerequisite to release”.[2] In other words, the point of porn is masturbation.

So what of pornographers who want to peddle their product as something with redeeming artistic value? What of Marvin Miller’s mail-order business?

In 1971, Miller was charged with distributing obscene material, and his case eventually went before the Supreme Court in what would become a landmark decision: *Miller v. California*. In 1973, Miller lost, and his case was remanded to the California courts. In the process, the Supreme Court redefined what counts as unprotected “obscenity”. Ironically, the three-prong test for obscenity is now called the “Miller test”. In order for something to be deemed obscene, the following criteria must be met:

- The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to prurient interest.
- The work depicts or describes sexual conduct in a patently offensive way.
- The work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

No doubt, the line between pornography and art can be blurry. Some say that the artistic value of porn is in the eye of the beholder. Perhaps it is. But at the end of the day, porn is not created for the sake of beauty, and true art is not created for the sake of masturbation.

5. Swimsuit editions and men's magazines are not porn.

Loaded, launched in 1994, is one of Great Britain's best-selling "lads' mags", or men's magazines. *Loaded* 's style is mirrored in other men's magazines on both sides of the Atlantic: *Maxim*, *FHM*, *Nuts*, *King*, and many more.

Martin Daubney was *Loaded's* longest-running editor—a job he said he was born for—and he attempted to embody the *Loaded* brand.[1] He was a heavy drinker, enjoyed casual sex, and was the subject of tabloid scandals. He spent as much time as he could on *Loaded*'s gonzo journalism assignments: taking acid to mark the fortieth anniversary of LSD, hanging out with biker gangs in Havana, test-driving motorbikes, and shooting radioactive wolves in Chernobyl from a helicopter.

Daubney said the essence of *Loaded* is to perpetuate the fantasy that male adolescence can be prolonged indefinitely. "You have the rest of your life to grow up," said the thirty-five-year-old Daubney. "Why would you want to end the good times?"[2]

Filled with barely clothed and, at times, totally naked women, *Loaded* is a premium example of today's men's magazine. But is it "porn"? U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart was asked for his ruling about whether the controversial 1958 film *The Lovers* should be deemed "hard-core pornography". His candid ruling has since become famous: "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that."[3]

The word "pornography" comes from the Greek words *porne*, meaning "prostitution" or "prostituted woman", and *graphos*, meaning "writings" or "engravings". Under this definition, pornography is not only graphic portrayals of sex or sexuality, broadly speaking, but also *commercial* sex. Pornography is about an economic exchange: it is sexually explicit material made by producers and paid for by consumers for the purpose of generating sexual activity.

Under this definition, magazines such as *Loaded* could be considered pornographic both in their intent and in their use. Compare the first issues of *Playboy* from the 1950s with the material in *Loaded* today, and you will not see much difference between them; the intentions of the publishers and the readers do not seem much different either.

Another clue that current men's magazines and their readers are not much different from producers and consumers of prostitution is their attitude toward women. Psychologists from the University of Surrey and Middlesex University took quotes about women from convicted rapists and from men's magazines and asked people to label which ones came from which. Most people could not distinguish the sources of the following quotes: "You do not want to be caught red-handed. . . . Go and smash her on a park bench. That used to be my trick."

"Girls love being tied up. . . . It gives them the chance to be the helpless victim."

"You'll find most girls will be reluctant about going to bed with somebody or crawling in the back seat of a car. . . . But you can usually seduce them, and they'll do it willingly."

"I think girls are like plasticine, if you warm them up you can do anything you want with them."

All of these quotes—and several others that are far worse—come from men's magazines, accompanied by full-page photos of women in enticing poses.

Former *Loaded* editor Daubney came to see men's magazines in a different light a few years ago when he investigated the effects of porn on youth. Interviewing neuroscientists, teenagers, and others, Daubney was shocked and saddened by how much teens had been warped by their pornographic experiences—a revelation that confirmed his decision to leave *Loaded*. He has since become a public advocate for protecting young people from porn:

> From 2003-2010 I edited lad's magazine *Loaded*. With its frequent nudity and lewd photo spreads, I'd long been accused of being a soft pornographer, and after leaving *Loaded* I agonised that my magazine may have switched a generation onto more explicit online porn. . . . Like many parents, I fear that my boy's childhood could be taken away by pornography. So we have to fight back. We need to get tech-savvy, and as toe-curling as it seems, we are the first generation that will have to talk to our children about porn. We have to tell our kids that pornographic sex is fake and real sex is about love, not lust. By talking to them, they stand a chance. If we stick our head in the sand, we are fooling only ourselves.[4]

6. Only religious people oppose porn.

As I wrote in the introduction, this book isn't a religious offensive against pornography. Still, you're reading a book produced by a large Catholic publishing house; and if you've googled my name, you know that I am Catholic, unashamedly so. I run in circles with many people who dislike pornography, many of whom are religious to at least some degree.

The fact is, many people who oppose porn are religious, leading some to believe that only religious people oppose it.

For instance, psychologist Dr. David Ley says that all the talk about porn addiction and sex addiction is coming from religious people advocating their religion's sexual morality:

> They are typically unable to put forth a healthy model of sexuality, and when they do, it is so transparently conservative and religiously driven that it's frightening. Most of the leaders of the sex-addiction movement are themselves recovering supposed sex addicts and religious folks. That's fine, it's fine for them to be advocating, but what they're advocating for is a moral system, not a medical one.[1]

Dr. Ley appears to be placing a sharp divide between moral and medical systems and how they view the human person and human flourishing.

A couple of matters should be made clear at the outset. First, just because some people oppose porn because it violates the morality taught by their religion does not mean their cause is wrong. During the nineteenth-century movement to abolish slavery, many Quakers opposed the trans-Atlantic slave trade because it violated the precepts of their religion, which teaches equality. Their religious motivation did not make their cause wrong.

Second, in a free society people should not be excluded from civil discourse, or be discounted as having nothing to contribute to it, just because they accept the morals taught by their religion. Many people who are against stealing and murder were taught the Ten Commandments in their churches or synagogues. Should their upbringing exclude them from public discussions about violent crime?

Stephen Carter of Yale Law School says this kind of privatizing of religion is unjust:

> Efforts to craft a public square from which religious conversation is absent, no matter how

> thoughtfully worked out, will always in the end say to those of organized religion that they alone, unlike everyone else, must enter public dialogue only after leaving behind that part of themselves that they may consider the most vital.[2]

Every person, whether religious or not, has ideas about what human flourishing looks like, and he ought to be able to share those ideas in the public square.

With these concerns out of the way, we can deal squarely with the myth itself. Is it true that only religious people oppose porn?

Several years ago, the magazine *GQ* ran a thought-provoking article about why men should quit looking at porn. The same year that *GQ* dished out provocative photos of the hundred "sexiest women of the twenty-first century", the magazine also told their readers that masturbating to images of sexy women might be a bad idea. What spurred this advice? Editors of the magazine had stumbled upon a growing group on Reddit.com called NoFap, an online community of (mostly) men who were challenging each other to put away porn and masturbation.

This community began not because of religious motivations, but because its members wanted to see how quitting porn and masturbation would improve their overall health and well-being. About 64 percent of NoFappers had developed tastes for porn that had become extreme or deviant. Among the twenty-seven- to thirty-one-year-olds in the group, 19 percent were suffering from premature ejaculation, 25 percent were totally disinterested in sex with a partner, 31 percent had difficulty reaching orgasm, and 34 percent were experiencing erectile dysfunction. After joining the NoFap community and quitting their porn habits, 60 percent found that their sexual function improved.[3]

I had the pleasure of conversing with the founder of the NoFap community, Alexander Rhodes, who describes himself as an agnostic. At the time of my interview, most NoFappers considered themselves atheists or agnostics, and currently there are well over 150,000 online members. When asked why he started the community, Rhodes told me, "Love is my motivation." He wants to see people live porn-free lives because he honestly believes we are better off without it. Comparing pornography to cigarettes, he said, "It is always a harmful thing to consume."

Men like Rhodes and the thousands of nonreligious individuals in his online community are not alone in their disdain of pornography. Men with damaged libidos are not the only ones who think pornography is a problem; thousands of women do as well. In the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, the world saw the rise of a new wave of feminists who ardently spoke out against the social ills of pornography —and these same women often also opposed organized religion.

In conclusion, religious people are not the only ones who oppose porn. There are others who oppose it because personal experience, social science, or medical research has shown that porn is not conducive to their well-being.

THE PORN INDUSTRY

7. Porn producers help to make the porn industry safe for the performers.

Condom use in porn films has been a subject of much debate in California for years. At the end of 2009, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation filed a petition to require mandatory condom use for adult film workers. The Safer Sex in the Adult Film Industry Act won the popular vote among California voters, but it was eventually killed in a state senate committee.[1]

Kimberly Kane, one of the porn industry's top female directors, says that the efforts of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation have only complicated matters for porn stars. Legal expenses forced AIM Healthcare, which was the central STD testing facility and database for L.A. porn actors, to close its doors in 2010. Since then, multiple testing facilities have cropped up; without a central database, in the instance of an HIV outbreak, it would be difficult to track infected performers.

Furthermore, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation also pushed to get porn stars categorized as employees, as opposed to independent contractors. Kane says this is inaccurate, unsafe, and ridiculous. Most performers work for multiple companies each year, and seldom more than once—they are clearly independent contractors. If porn stars were employees, it would be illegal for companies to test them for STDs. Furthermore, as employees they would need to comply with all OSHA standards, which require not just condoms, but dental dams, gloves, goggles, and masks. Unless the porn industry plans on making a lot of surgeon-themed porn, this is unworkable.[2]

At the heart of the debate is the safety of the performers themselves. No one doubts that an HIV outbreak in the industry would be bad for business, so why doubt that industry leaders are doing everything they can to keep porn stars safe?

Safe. That's an interesting word, isn't it? It comes from a Latin word meaning "uninjured, in good health, whole". I say it is interesting because when I think of the porn industry, nothing about it strikes me as a place where women (or men, for that matter) are uninjured, in good health, or made whole.

Despite all the testing that goes on in the industry, as of 2013, the industry standard is that a performer is cleared for work if he tests negative for HIV, chlamydia, and gonorrhea. Since there was a syphilis scare in 2012, testing for it

has become more regular. Hepatitis is largely not a concern.[3] Dr. Sharon Mitchell, founder of the Adult Industry Medical Health Care Foundation, says that 66 percent of porn stars have herpes.[4]

Beyond the probability of infection and disease, the sex work itself is a matter of great concern. In porn, there are basically two subgenres: feature films and gonzo films. Feature films have the pretense of a plot, character development, conflict, and resolution, all wrapped around lengthy sex scenes. Gonzo films don't waste time with a plot. As one porn trade magazine puts it:

> Gonzo, non-feature fare is the overwhelmingly dominant porn genre since it's less expensive to produce than plot-oriented features, but just as importantly, is the fare of choice for the solo stroking consumer who merely wants to cut to the chase, get off on the good stuff, then, if they really wanna catch some acting, plot and dialog, pop in the latest Netflix disc.

Says industry leader Lexington Steele, "Gonzo really always pushes the envelope." It is body-punishing sex at its worst. Not only do these films test (and break) the limits of a woman's body; much of what they contain is unsanitary. According to Robert Jensen, a woman in a gonzo film "is either expressing disregard for her own health or accepting the man's implicit imposition of the idea that her health is of no concern. Either way, she is less than fully human."[5]

During her interview on ABC's *Primetime*, Belladonna, a well-known gonzo performer, described how she needed to prepare herself mentally and physically for the work she did. "I go through a process from the night before. I stop eating at 5:00. I do, you know, like two enemas. The next morning I don't eat anything. It's so draining on your body."[6]

Danielle Williams said she saw a lot of brutality in her years in the industry. Here is her description of the physical damage endured by the performers:

> A female porn star that had been in the industry for a while had excessive anal intercourse and a piece of her muscle from her anus fell out on set while she was filming. Some females damaged their reproductive systems, which left them unable to have children. A male porn star broke the muscle in his penis because he was having abnormal and outrageous rough sex.[7]

Ex-performer Emily Eve described the physical and emotional toll she suffered while in the industry:

> I shot scenes where I had to pretend to be dead and let someone rape my dead body. I came home bruised and sometimes a little bloody from the rough scenes. . . . They slapped me and spit on me and called me horrible things. . . . Time after time, I would go home and cry myself to sleep because I feared what the next day would bring.[8]

Not surprisingly, alcohol and drugs are often used and freely distributed on a porn set, sometimes to numb the physical and emotional pain, and sometimes to numb the mind so that a man or a woman can zone out during a shoot. Ex-performer Jersey Jaxin explained, "Guys are punching you in the face. You get ripped. Your insides can come out of you. It's never ending. You're viewed as an object—not as a human with a spirit. People do drugs because they can't deal with the way they're being treated."[9] Indeed, many porn stars report that they routinely binge on ecstasy, cocaine, marijuana, Xanax, Valium, Vicodin, and alcohol.

This is the brutal reality of an industry that claims to desire the safety of its performers. Stunt men in Hollywood have safer jobs.

The porn industry is far from safe. I agree wholeheartedly with what porn performer Aurora Snow says about this line of work: "It's important to remember this business is built on sex and money, not trust."[10]

8. Porn isn't sex slavery. The actors freely choose the lifestyles they lead.

Many porn stars are putting a fresh face on the industry. These new starlets speak about porn as their dream job—the ultimate fulfillment of their career goals. Asa Akira is one such woman, and she writes about her experiences in her book, *Insatiable: Porn—A Love Story*.

"There's nothing else I'd rather be doing," she writes. "Almost every time I shoot a sex scene, I fall a little bit in love. In love with being watched. In love with being on display. In love with being the center of attention."

She is aware, of course, that presenting a sex-crazed public image is good for business, but for her it's no ruse; it is the very reason she is perfect for porn. "I'm an exhibitionist, I'm hypersexual, I'm sure there's a lot of me that's narcissistic."[1]

This widely successful star has appeared in more than three hundred adult movies and is one of the richest porn stars in America, with a reported net worth of more than $1.5 million.[2] She's known for her extreme sexual acts onscreen—even according to porn standards—and she knows that some might find what she does troubling. "I can see how a lot of people would see that kind of rough sex as degrading to women," she says. "For me, though, if that's my fantasy, and I'm living it out, how is that degrading?"

Ms. Akira also knows she's not the norm. In an interview, she addressed that very issue: "Every time I talk about the industry, I do try to make sure that people know I'm the best-case scenario. It's not everyone's truth."

So, what is everyone else's truth? What are the experiences of other women in the industry? Legal scholar Catharine A. MacKinnon offers her frightening summary insights:

> As with all prostitution, the women and children in pornography are, in the main, not there by choice but because of a lack of choices. They usually "consent" only in a degraded and demented sense of the word (common also to the law of rape) in which a person who despairs at stopping what is happening, sees no escape, has no real alternative, was often sexually abused before as a child, may be addicted to drugs, is homeless, hopeless, is often trying to avoid being beaten or killed, is almost always economically desperate, acquiesces in being sexually abused for payment, even if, in most instances, the payment is made to someone else.[3]

MacKinnon says that a common defense of pornography often starts in the celebration of free choice and in the assumption that even when people who are poor and powerless make voluntary choices to perform in pornography, no thought of their economic situation should be considered. The celebration of this choice is seen as a feminist ideal, because, after all, "When women express our free will, we spread our legs for a camera."[4]

Some have dismissed MacKinnon's statements as gross overgeneralizations based on anecdotal evidence, but this is far from the truth. Extensive research (much of which can be found in the terrific anthology *Not for Sale: Feminists Resisting Prostitution and Pornography*) backs her up. To continue to insist that thousands of real stories from real women are merely anecdotal is as academically dishonest as it is offensive.

As we take in their stories one by one, pornography more and more begins to resemble sex slavery: both are operated by men (and a growing number of women) who are willing to put women through body-punishing sex for profit. Even in the midst of "consensual" sex, women are subjected to all manner of nonconsensual abuses. Quotes from former porn stars demonstrate this:

Emily Eve: "When I was finished with the scene, my throat was bleeding, I had bruises all over my body, my vagina was torn in two places, and I ended up with pink eye. I felt so weak, used, and honestly I felt like I had been raped all over again."[5]

Jessi Summers: "I did gonzo porn to start out and it was the most degrading, embarrassing, horrible thing ever! I had to shoot an interactive DVD, which takes hours and hours of shooting time, with a 104-degree fever! I was crying and wanted to leave but my agent wouldn't let me, he said he couldn't let me flake on it."[6]

Corina Taylor: "[D]uring the scene with a male porn star. . . I yelled at him to stop and screamed no over and over but he would not stop. The pain became too much and I was in shock and my body went limp. I couldn't fight him off anymore. After the scene, they wouldn't give me a ride home. I called a taxi and went to a medical clinic to check me out due to the severe pain I was in. A day later I received a phone call from Vince to keep my mouth shut about the rape. He threatened me that I didn't know who I was messing with and that his edited footage of what happened would prove me a liar."[7]

Neesa: “In the worst scene and moment of my life, I was raped and verbally and mentally abused. . . . It was the most horrible and degrading experience I ever had. I was in complete shock and horror.”[8]

Elizabeth Rollings: “It wasn’t long before [my agent] started propositioning me for sex aside from the website work we did together and telling me if I didn’t have sex with him it would cost me. He often did this right after a scene, filling his selfish, lustful desires while his wife. . . was downstairs. He threatened me time after time and said he would financially break me if I didn’t obey. He wasn’t the only producer to force me to do off camera sex acts. Prostitution was a form of manipulation producers use to get off and get more scenes out of the women. But I trusted [him]. I thought he cared about me. I never thought he would have done this to me.”[9]

Jessie Jewels: “People in the porn industry are numb to real life and are like zombies walking around. The abuse that goes on in this industry is completely ridiculous. The way these young ladies are treated is totally sick and brainwashing. I left due to the trauma I experienced even though I was there only a short time.”[10]

To speak against pornography because it is a venomous industry that preys on the weaknesses of others is out of step with the times. After all, once a person’s image is captured, the person who was photographed is of very little concern because the image is now an “idea” and, as such, a piece of constitutionally protected free speech.

Legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon caricaturizes the typical pro-porn argument:

> [W]e are told that to criticize this is to criticize “ideas,” not what is being done either to the women in the magazine or to women in society as a whole. Any critique of what is done is then cast as a moral critique, which, as liberals know, can involve only opinions or ideas, not facts about life. This entire defensive edifice, illogical as it may seem, relies utterly coherently on the five cardinal dimensions of liberalism: individualism, naturalism, voluntarism, idealism, and moralism.[11]

What does MacKinnon mean when she mentions these five cardinal dimensions of a pro-porn feminism? They build upon each other.

1. Individualism—Members of a group who have no choice but to live life as part of that group are treated as if they are simply unique individuals. A person might be abused or repeatedly raped as a child, or might be

repeatedly exposed to hard-core material in his preadolescent or adolescent years, or might be destitute and poor. If any of these people, acting out of their brokenness and powerlessness, turn to the porn set, these factors are dwarfed by a profound sense of their individuality. They are not raped, oversexualized, and poor people; they are seen simply as people.

2. Naturalism—These factors of a person's upbringing or socioeconomic status are then reduced to nothing more than natural characteristics. They are no longer social factors that should give us pause before using their bodies for financial gain; they are simply natural or normal conditions of life.

3. Voluntarism—Because these women and men are merely individuals with very normal characteristics, their choices to act in pornography are seen as free choices in the purest sense of the word. No thought should be entertained that perhaps their brokenness and powerlessness are making them easier targets for coercion by those in power.

4. Idealism—The material reality of an actor's life on and off the porn set is therefore of very little concern. What matters is not reality but "ideas about" reality, which is all pornographic images are—erotic ideas.

5. Moralism—Therefore, if pornographic media is simply an idea, it should be treated as morally relative: reasonable people should be able to form different but equally valid preferences about these ideas.[12]

One needs only to read a few first-person accounts of porn performers to see the tragic circumstances that left them so weak, insecure, and powerless prior to entering the porn industry and then to see pornography for what it is: exploitation.

Yes, many women have experienced the worst of it in the porn industry, but what about the others—the women who have chosen to stay in porn despite the difficulties? Yes, they may have encountered their fair share of horny, misogynist men, but they have risen above that climate and taken control of their porn careers in a male-driven business. Regarding this we can make a couple of important points.

First, insofar as women eagerly choose to be part of the porn industry, this is, in some sense, "better" than coercion or force. But consensual involvement is only one factor among many in evaluating this topic. Professional drug dealers may not be forced to be drug dealers, but the lack of coercion doesn't make their

career choice okay.

Second, to celebrate one's personal empowerment while creating a product that is markedly disempowering to others is not socially responsible. Some say that the essence of female liberation is merely the ability for women to make choices, even choices to be in porn. To this Rebecca Whisnant offers an intelligent reply:

> Feminism is about ending the subordination of women. Expanding women's freedom of choice on a variety of fronts is an important part of that, but it is not the whole story. In fact, any meaningful liberation movement involves not only claiming the right to make choices, but also holding oneself accountable for the effects of those choices on oneself and on others.[13]

For the avid porn consumer, I would like to underline the abuses that porn performers face in their line of work. No matter the level of consent, it is a manly thing to treat a woman who has forgotten her dignity with dignity nonetheless.

9. Porn stars are just well-rounded nymphomaniacs.

If you're looking for some light reading, I positively don't recommend Lainie Speiser's *Confessions of the Hundred Hottest Porn Stars*. This book details the off-camera lives of many men and women in the industry, offering juicy tidbits of their sexual adventures with full-color photos in a hardcover coffee-table book.

This is the image the porn industry wants to portray: just a bunch of women, crazy about sex, allowing themselves to be filmed for our pleasure.

In several well-known cases, this is not far from the truth. Entering the porn industry at the age of eighteen, Sasha Grey became one of the industry's most successful young actresses. Within her first year in the industry, she received multiple awards at the AVN Adult Movie Awards. The next year, she became the youngest person to win Female Performer of the Year. The next year, the pornographic magazine *Genesis* rated her number one in its "Porn's Hot 100" issue.

Before moving to L.A. to join the porn industry, Grey e-mailed Mark Spiegler, a big talent agent for porn actresses. In her e-mail she included a long list of the sexual acts she would be willing to perform for porn and this mission statement:

> Most of the porn that I see is boring, and does not arouse me physically or visually. There is only a handful of porn stars that continue to push the boundaries of what women are supposed to be like or be like in bed. This entices me to be one of these young women. Not to mention, my lust for sexual creativity. I hunger for all modes of sexual perversity. I am determined and ready to be a commodity that fulfills everyone's fantasies.[1]

During her years in the industry, she treated her job like a calling. "I want to show people that I love what I do," she stated. "This is not a 9 to 5 job—go home and be with my husband and kids. I like what I do. I don't consider my job boring at all. It's definitely something I am proud of."

Mia Rose is another example. In 2006 Mia and her sister Ava started performing in a slew of porn films. Mia said that, before getting into porn, she had already slept with ninety-eight men, so having sex for the camera was no big deal.[2] She described herself as a sexaholic: "Sex plays a massively huge role in my life because I worship sex. I don't just love it, I worship it."[3]

So, yes, some porn stars are in the industry because of their fascination with sex; others, however, are in the industry for entirely different reasons. Dr. Sharon Mitchell, cofounder of the Adult Industry Medical Healthcare Foundation (AIM), regularly sees porn actors and actresses in her clinic. She says there are three types of women drawn to pornography: those who are addicted to sex, those who are addicted to money, and those who are addicted to fame.[4]

Some, like Elizabeth Rollings, enter into porn because they've fallen on desperate times.

> I was in my first movie because of an ad I answered on Craigslist off the Internet. I needed money and it sounded easy to do so I thought, why not? I knew it was wrong but I needed quick cash and of course it was legal, right? So I did the movie and never told anyone until months later when I decided to do it full time.[5]

One male-female sex scene can earn a woman between $700 and $1,200 and can earn a man about half that much.[6] Belladonna, famous for her *Primetime* interview with Diane Sawyer in 2003, said, "I was eighteen years old, the only thing on my mind was the money."[7]

The big moneymakers branch out beyond their personal appearances in porn films to build a brand around their name. They start sex-toy product lines, dance at clubs, host high-end parties, write as sex-advice columnists, begin websites, and even direct and produce pornographic films themselves. Jenna Jameson, Tera Patrick, and Jesse Jane are the best examples of performers who have successfully branded themselves.

Other performers are motivated by fame, seeing porn as a stepping-stone into Hollywood, though crossover stars are rare. Dr. Mitchell comments about her concerns for such women:

> The people that have the most crucial needs, in my opinion and experience, are the ones who are addicted to fame because these people have compromised backgrounds, perhaps a very bad family life, perhaps some abuse growing up as a child. Therefore, on their eighteenth birthday, they end up in L.A., thinking pornography is going to be the backdoor into Hollywood.[8]

The testimonies of porn stars themselves shatter the first part of the myth that these stars are just well-rounded nymphomaniacs. No, not all porn stars are motivated by a hypersexual drive to engage in porn. Many are desperate for money. Others are driven by fame. But the second part of this myth is troubling as well as incorrect: the notion of a "well-rounded nymphomaniac". By definition, someone who is hypersexual (a more modern diagnosis for

nymphomania) is not a well-rounded person. Hypersexuality is a sign of a disorder.

Let's be clear: hypersexuality is not an enjoyment of sex or an enjoyment of lots of sex. Hypersexuality is not merely thinking about sex a lot. Hypersexuality is an obsessive pursuit of sexual pleasure. Clinicians believe hypersexuality can be caused by a wide variety of factors, such as personality disorders, sexual addictions, obsessive-compulsive disorder, impulse-control problems, or past abuse. Often a hypersexual person uses sexual pleasure as a way to find emotional stability.

Stephen L. Braveman, M.A., the western regional representative of the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists, says that childhood sexual-abuse survivors tend either to pursue sex recklessly as adults or to forgo sex completely. "They typically wind up with splitting behavior, where things become very black and white. Either they are very sexually active, or they shut down sexually."[9]

One does not have to search long to find porn stars with pasts of sexual trauma. Crissy Moran spent six years in porn, earning $15,000 per month from her website alone at the peak of her career. But for her, porn was just an extension of a deeper brokenness stemming from early sexual abuse and a string of abusive relationships. "I was a relationship addict. After so many of these relationships, I hit rock bottom, because the breakups were so hard."[10]

Shelley Lubben, a former porn actress and the founder of the Pink Cross Foundation, says that many porn actresses admit to her that they were sexually, physically, or verbally abused as children. "We were taught at a young age that sex made us valuable," she confesses.[11] Jennifer Ketcham, a former porn actress, agrees, saying that many women in the porn industry come from backgrounds of rape, abuse, and neglect. "Though plenty of women who were abused as children do not go into porn," she writes, "many women who have been abused (physically, emotionally, or sexually) do participate in sexual risk taking behaviors"—and involvement in porn is one avenue some of them take.[12]

Of course, no one can claim that every sex-worshipping porn actor or actress is a product of abuse. But the porn industry, by its very nature, attracts many sexually and relationally damaged people, and anyone concerned about the well-being of actors and actresses in the industry should heed this fact.

If someone is suffering from a sexual disorder, do we have license to turn her into a freak show? This would be like finding individuals with Prader-Willi syndrome, a genetic disease that includes the symptom of constant hunger, and entering them into an eating contest for others to watch for entertainment.

No, not all porn stars are hypersexual, and those who are truly nymphomaniacs are by definition not well rounded.

10. Sure, child porn is a problem, but I watch only adult porn. No harm in that.

When thirteen-year-old Alicia Kozakiewicz met Scott Tyree in an online chat room, he was gentle, courteous, and respectful, and he seemed to be there for her on the other end of the computer whenever she needed him. She knew he was an older man, but that didn't matter. He was her friend. Over time this man played to her common teenage vulnerabilities. Eventually he introduced sexual topics into their conversations, and she parroted back what she thought he wanted to hear. They chatted late into the night, at times exchanging photos, and eventually her inhibitions were chiseled away.

On New Year's Day 2002, Tyree drove five hours to meet Alicia. She knew he was coming and sneaked out of the house to meet him down the street, unwittingly walking into the worst nightmare of her life. He abducted her and began making the long drive home, saying things such as "Shut up", "Be good", and "The trunk's cleaned out for you." Late at night, he arrived home and took Alicia to his basement dungeon. He spent the next several days repeatedly raping her, abusing her, and using sadistic devices on her.

He shared photos of his prize with a few online friends. She had become not only his property but pornography for other men to enjoy.

Thankfully, a man who saw one of the photos and recognized Alicia from an online missing person's report anonymously came forward with a tip for the FBI. In a million-to-one rescue, Scott Tyree was arrested at his place of employment on January 4, and Alicia was discovered naked, frightened, and traumatized, hiding under a bed in Tyree's home.

Stories of child pornography are always disturbing to read about. Now, more than a decade after her rescue, Alicia works for the protection of the thousands of children who are groomed online by predators and those who are used by family, friends, and neighbors for making child porn. She hits the nail on the head when she says, "I think the term 'child pornography' waters it down a bit. These are crime scene images of child rape."[1]

There are clear differences between child pornography and pornography that features adult actors. A twenty-one-year-old woman who enters the porn industry with her eyes wide open and is paid for her services is far different from

a ten-year-old girl who is raped for the camera.

Still, this is an area in which legal definitions don't serve us well in our personal choices. Consider the following: What is the difference between a seventeen-year-old girl making amateur porn in her bedroom with her boyfriend and the same girl doing the same thing after her eighteenth birthday? The first is illegal. The second, all things being equal, is potentially legal. But why? Because the law sees minors as incapable of giving consent, and yet in this scenario, there is little to no psychological difference between the girl in one situation and the next.

The point of my argument is not to discuss the legal particulars about the age of consent, but to poke a hole in the fictitious notion that something magical happens at the age of eighteen. Take the example of a girl who is sexually abused by relatives and boyfriends throughout her youth. She starts to act out sexually in response to this trauma and, at the age of fourteen, shares videos of her sexual exploits online. Not only would this be illegal pornography in many places, but most would cringe at the thought of masturbating to material they knew was the product of a young woman's broken sexual past. But if the same woman is engaging in the same activity at age eighteen, operating out of the same state of brokenness, should we suddenly comfort ourselves with, "Well, it's legal now"? This is merely using a black-and-white legal distinction to ignore a deep psychological reality.

While porn has always sought to satisfy niche tastes, the overall trend in demand for porn is sexualized youth. This isn't merely because younger people have fewer physical flaws. When pornographers use terms such as "barely legal", "jailbait", "sweeties", and "Lolitas" to market their product, they are accentuating not just youth, but childlikeness. In an analysis of four hundred million web searches from July 2009 to July 2010, neuroscientists Ogi Ogasa and Sai Gaddam concluded that the most popular category of sexual searches online—by a huge margin—is "youth".[2]

This is what Professor Dan Allender calls the "pedophilic drift" in our culture. As pornography pushes the limits, portraying women as younger and younger, popular media "adultifies" children in its TV shows and advertising.

In 2002, *Ashcroft v. Free Speech Coalition* was a landmark case for pornography. Prior to this, the Child Porn Prevention Act had defined child pornography very broadly, including even "virtual" child porn: any film or picture that contained what looked like a child engaging in a sexual act. This included an adult made to look like a child or a cartoon of a child. The Ashcroft case overturned this law as unconstitutional: only pornography that uses real

children is prohibited.[3]

My point here is not about whether “virtual” child porn should be legal, but about the willingness of pornographers to push the envelope so that men can lust after what their brains interpret to be children. This is by no means a new trend for the Internet age. In 1984, the U.S. Department of Justice funded a study to examine the images of children in *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, and *Hustler* magazines. In total, researchers looked at 683 issues printed from 1953 to 1984. Researchers found close to one thousand images showing sexual scenarios of adults with children, implying incest or molestation; 51 percent of the child cartoons and 46 percent of the child photographs depicted children ages three to eleven years old.[4]

In the end, we are responsible for the businesses we choose to endorse with our money and our mouse clicks. Choosing to avoid child porn and to watch only “adult” pornography may sound noble to some, but in the end, it only supports an industry that tries with all its might to sexualize youth.

11. I don’t pay for my porn, so I’m not contributing to the porn industry.

While porn is a huge moneymaker, in the last several years, the industry’s profits have seen a downturn. This isn’t because people are losing interest in porn—far from it. This is because of the enormous availability of free porn online.

According to the *Journal of Internet Law*, in 2005 pornography accounted for 69 percent of the total pay-per-view Internet market, outpacing even news, sports, and video games.[1] A year later, the sex-related entertainment business—including video sales and rentals, Internet sales, cable, pay-per-view, phone sex, exotic dance clubs, magazines, and novelty stores—brought in estimated revenues just under $13 billion in the United States.[2] Global porn revenues were estimated at $20 billion.

Only five years later, however, the Free Speech Coalition estimated that both global and U.S. porn revenues declined by 50 percent, due to the amount of free pornography available online.[3] One study reported that between 80 and 90 percent of Internet porn viewers access only free material, whether it be free samples of pay material, bootleg copies, or amateur photos and videos.[4]

So, how do porn websites make their money when the Internet is saturated with free porn? First, they entice visitors to pay for premium content with membership fees that allow them access to full-length videos, high-definition videos, 3D videos, films with leading actresses, behind-the-scenes content, or content without ads or pop-ups.[5] In 2008, an estimated three million Americans purchased pornography online, paying an average of sixty dollars per month.[6]

But what if you aren’t one of those people? What if you have never given porn websites a dime? One way porn sites make money is through malware—malicious software—which can include spyware or viruses that are downloaded to a user’s device without his consent. Malware causes technical problems and can monitor and control the user’s online behavior. Sometimes affiliates will pay websites for every download of their malware.

Gilbert Wondracek, a postdoctoral scholar at Vienna University of Technology, invented a web crawler to download content from half a million porn sites and found that 3.23 percent of the pages visited contained malware of some kind. That may not sound like a lot, but it is five times the amount of

malware discovered in previous research. And when you multiply that by millions of daily visitors, it adds up to a lot of potentially vulnerable computers.[7]

Another primary way porn sites make money is through advertising. Consider some of the online services you use for free: Google, Facebook, and the numerous other websites you frequent. With an Internet-enabled device and an Internet connection, these sites are free for public consumption, and yet some of them are among the most profitable businesses in the world. How? Much of that money is made through advertisements. The same goes for Internet porn money.

Porn sites might contain sidebar advertising, display ads on the videos themselves, or ads that pop up when the video is paused. Advertisements might come from specific affiliates or from an ad network that contains advertisements from hundreds or thousands of companies. Money is paid to porn sites every time someone clicks on the ad (pay per click), or every time an ad is shown (cost per impression), or every time a visitor buys the advertised product or service (pay per sale), or by giving a sliding percentage based on traffic volume (percentage program).

In other words, by merely browsing porn sites, spending hours on end racking up page views, you are contributing to porn's profits. For many of the pages you visit, cost-per-impression advertisers are padding porn's deep pockets. The more you add to a website's popularity, the more money porn companies make.

PORN AND OUR SEXUALITY

12. Women don't struggle with porn.

Pornography is typically seen as something that men do: men create it; men watch it; men get addicted to it. Women are often seen as the victims of pornography. Pornography objectifies women; it abuses them and teaches men to abuse them. Those are the common story lines. Men are the aggressors, taught by a poor teacher, and women suffer because of it.

If a woman watches pornography, it is usually assumed that her boyfriend or husband wants her to watch it with him. A recent study of heterosexual women who used porn concluded: "This suggests that when heterosexual women consume pornography, they usually do it in the company of their partner."[1]

Some of these women watching porn may be doing so under pressure from their partners. What we often fail to discuss, however, is the fact that some women watch pornography of their own accord, and some of those women feel they simply cannot stop.

Lauren Dubinsky dabbled in porn use. She did not consider herself the type of person to become addicted to anything—smoking, alcohol, or porn—so she felt safe indulging in porn on occasion. Just the occasional indulgence changed her, however, and the shame of being a woman with this struggle made it that much more difficult. In her piece "What I Wish I'd Known before Watching Porn", Lauren outlines several things that resulted from her watching pornography: she acquired a "victim mentality", her intimate relationships suffered, and she was burdened with feelings of shame, guilt, and isolation. "I wish someone had talked about how women watch it too," she writes, "so I wouldn't have had to spend years living under the shame that comes with being 'the only one' and thinking there was something wrong with me."[2]

Audrey Assad grew up in a conservative religious home in New Jersey, and in her youth she became mired in pornography. The resulting guilt and confusion were compounded by misinformation—the often-repeated notion that porn was a "guy issue". Believing this only isolated her further. Today as a contemporary musician, she has the opportunity to speak in front of crowds of young women. Whenever she shares her experiences in public, she says, she is astounded at the number of people who want to talk to her afterward—women who have felt isolated and alone in their struggles.

While pornography use among women is rarely discussed, it is on the rise.

One study indicated that 50 percent of female adolescents have used pornography in the previous six months. Other studies indicate that 25 percent of women ages eighteen to thirty-four use pornography. Even 4 percent of women ages fifty to sixty-five admit to using pornography. These statistics include any type of porn use, from occasional to frequent. About 2 percent of women use pornography multiple times per week.[3]

In contrast to those numbers, during a Pew Research Center study conducted in 2010, only 2 percent of the women surveyed admitted to watching pornography online. In 2013, that number jumped to 8 percent. If other studies are to be believed, that number is actually much higher.

One complication in such studies is the stigma associated with being a heterosexual woman compulsively viewing pornography. A Norwegian researcher commented, “I think heterosexual women still are influenced by the traditional conception of a proper woman being a pure woman, someone who doesn’t have sex unless its purpose is to express love or to have children. So consumption of pornography is still seen as something that is immoral or forbidden.”[4] As such, pornography use among women is misunderstood and understudied.

While the research about pornography use among women varies, statistics from porn websites themselves don’t lie. According to statistics from 2014, gathered by one of the top-ranking porn sites in the world, 23 percent of their viewers are women, nearly one woman for every five men. In America, females currently make up 15 percent of the viewing population.[5]

The common perception has been that men are more prone than women to watch pornography because they are more visually wired; therefore, they find sexual images more arousing. Women, on the other hand, have been assumed to be more emotionally and relationally wired and therefore less aroused by mere images. When women turn to sexual material, it has been thought, they are more likely to reach for a romance novel or erotica than for pornography. However, some studies have shown that women can be just as aroused by pornography as men are.

When compared with the stimulation from nonsexual images, pornographic images create two to three times the response in the brain—for men and women. In an MRI study, the brain activity of participants was measured while they were shown pornographic images. Both men and women had a heightened reaction to the stimuli, though the reactions in the male brains were in different locations from those in the female brains. Initially, researchers thought that this supported the idea that men are more moved by the images. When they interviewed the

study subjects, however, they found otherwise. While the brain activity of the men would seem to indicate that they were more aroused, the women were the ones who said the images were more arousing.[6]

Further study showed that women are just as visually stimulated as men and in nearly the same amount of time. However, the difference in how they were aroused depended on what part of the image they were looking at. Different aspects of the image were more arousing for one sex than for the other. Women were more aroused when the woman in the image was looking away, and they rated close-up genital images (i.e., hard-core pornography) as more arousing than men did.

So much for the idea that women are not as stimulated by pornography as men are. It is not known how many women actually like pornography, but what is certain is that the number of women who view it is increasing. What accounts for this uptick?

Before the advent of the World Wide Web, pornography existed mostly in the pages of "dirty" magazines aimed at men. While wives and mothers were home tending to hearth and children, men would slink down to the corner newsstand and leave with a brown paper bag hiding their guilty pleasure. Then came the "adult" stores and the tripleX theaters on the seedy side of town—not the places one would find a "respectable" woman.

But the world has changed considerably. Not only has pornography itself changed, but the way it is transmitted has also changed. Porn films have proliferated, and what was available only in theaters is now available for free online. A woman can sit in the comfort and privacy of her own home and watch whatever she wants. A majority of women who look at porn report that they turn to it as a means of stress relief and escape from the demands of everyday life.[7] The most paradoxical thing about women watching porn is that so much of what they watch is misogynist. While most of the porn genres women search for seem relatively mild, "rough sex" and "bondage" made the list of the top-sixteen searches by women in 2014. By comparison, neither of those terms made the top-sixteen searches by men.[8]

So what does this type of porn do to the women who watch it? To start, it desensitizes them to what is acceptable behavior. Most women, if asked, would frown upon being slapped, spit on, or choked. Yet there are some who celebrate this kind of behavior as supportive of women. According to actress Joanna Angel, participating in pornography that is physically and verbally aggressive toward women can "still be feminist".[9] For some, it is still feminist so long as the woman involved is freely choosing to be treated in this manner.

A recent study published in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly* shows that watching pornography can make both men and women more sexist—against women.[10] Many feminist groups are opposed to pornography for this very reason. Reporter Lauren Duca explains, "The fact that a woman who otherwise aligns with the feminist agenda may experience a reduction in the strength of her beliefs after watching sexist porn is especially upsetting."[11] So while the actress herself may find it liberating that she chose to be in the scene and had control over her choice, the fact is, the image she is presenting to other women is not one of choice, but of necessity. Masochism becomes not one of many choices but the choice a woman is supposed to make.

In response to the outcry for more "woman-friendly" porn, the industry has created a new category of pornography specifically designed for women. In femme porn, "women are depicted as objects of desire rather than merely a means for a guy to get off. They are slowly seduced and romanced into having sex with sincerity and smart conversation."[12] In 2007, femme-porn pioneer Candida Royale sold her videos at a rate of nearly ten thousand per month, presumably to women.[13] That is not to say that women do not watch the more typical hard-core pornography, because they do. But femme porn is a growing niche in the porn industry, to say the least.

This new niche dovetails nicely with the growing number of women being introduced to porn by their sexual partners. In other words, porn is being used to seduce women. This phenomenon is one of the noted differences between how men and women view pornography. Women typically view it with their partner, while men view it mostly while alone.[14]

With easy Internet access and special genres just for women, an increasing number of women are finding their release and escape in pornography. Some even watch to the point of making themselves vulnerable to addiction, though little, if any, research exists on female porn addicts.

Regardless, the days when pornography was only a man's issue are far behind us.

13. Not masturbating is unhealthy for a guy.

Perhaps no one has had a more profound impact on modern sexual ideas and morals than Sigmund Freud. The modern rejection of the notion that masturbation is a misuse of one's sexual powers can be traced to him. "It has occurred to me that masturbation is the one great habit that is a 'primary addiction,' " wrote Freud, "and that the other addictions, for example, alcohol, morphine, tobacco, excessive gambling, etc., only enter into life as a substitute and replacement for it."[1]

For many men, masturbation is as natural to their lives as urination. It is a biological need that fulfills an important function—and a pleasurable one, at that.

But masturbation has long been a taboo. In 1760, the Swiss physician Samuel Auguste Tissot published his now famous *L'Onanismo*, his dissertation on the physical ailments produced by masturbation. He believed that masturbating too much could lead to blurred vision, headaches, memory loss, gout, rheumatic disorders, and other medical problems. More than a century later Dr. John Harvey Kellogg (yes, the inventor of corn flakes), campaigned against masturbation in his *Plain Facts for Old and Young*, in which he said that masturbation could lead to urinary diseases, an enlarged prostate, and eventually impotence and insanity.

Moral philosophers in that era generally believed that masturbation was a great evil. Immanuel Kant thought that one should not abandon himself to "animal inclinations"; otherwise he will deprive himself of all self-respect.[2] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, himself a frequent masturbator in his youth, called it "the most deadly habit to which a young man can be subject".[3]

The tide against masturbation has most decidedly turned in Western culture in the last hundred years. Under the influence of men such as Sigmund Freud, Alfred Kinsey, William Masters, and Virginia Johnson, masturbation is commonly believed to be not only a natural human experience but also a healthy response to sexual urges.

Two lecturers on human sexuality at the University of Sydney, Anthony Santella and Spring Cooper, claim that studies prove that male masturbation is healthy. They claim that it reduces the risk of prostate cancer, increases immune-system functioning, and reduces depression—not to mention the avoidance of

pregnancy and STDs, when masturbation is used as a substitute for sex with another person.[4]

At this point, some clarity is needed. No doctor claims that masturbation will make you go blind and crazy, but neither should we claim, as some do, that avoiding masturbation is unhealthy. After all, when medical professionals say that masturbation is healthy for you, they aren't talking about getting your heart rate up and your circulation moving, which can be accomplished in other ways.

When some claim that masturbation is healthy, they are talking about ejaculation. Take prostate cancer, for instance. When Santella and Cooper claim that frequent masturbation reduces prostate cancer, they cite a study from the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that reports mixed results. Researchers write, "Nine studies observed a statistically significant or nonsignificant positive association; 3 studies reported no association; 7 studies found a statistically significant or nonsignificant inverse relationship; and 1 study found a U-shaped relationship." What does that mean in layman's terms? Ejaculation frequency is not related to prostate cancer.[5]

Conclusions from research in this area are mixed for a couple of reasons. First, they rely on a man's foggy memory of ejaculation frequency decades after the fact. Second, researchers often assume that all orgasms are created equal. Once researchers started discerning the difference between masturbation and vaginal intercourse, they noticed more consistent trends. One review of the literature found a very wide range of health benefits for penile-vaginal intercourse, but other sexual activities have weaker or no health associations, or, in the case of masturbation, negative associations.[6]

This should hardly surprise us. Sex is necessary for the survival and the flourishing of the human race, so it makes sense that sexual intercourse would come with some positive side effects.

If ejaculations are healthy, you might assume that those caused by masturbation are too, but they aren't. No one knows why exactly. The male body simply responds differently in different instances of ejaculation. Even the makeup of semen is different when ejaculations from masturbation and vaginal intercourse are compared.[7]

Though Tissot and Kellogg went too far in their pronouncements about the negative health effects of masturbation, modern studies have actually found that frequent masturbation is associated with:

• more prostate abnormalities

• less ability to recover from erectile dysfunction

• less satisfaction with one's mental health

• less relationship satisfaction

• depression and less happiness[8]

The fact is this: there is no documented health problem associated with refraining from masturbation, and the jury is still out on whether there are provable positive health effects from the practice.

Putting the health question aside, however, we can get to the heart of the matter of why men masturbate in the first place. After all, no one ever masturbated while fantasizing about reduced cancer risks.

We live in a society in which it is so normal to escape into a world of sexual fantasy that we hardly believe there could be another way of living. But this isn't a universal human experience. The Aka people, for instance, are a traditional hunter-gatherer tribe in the Central African Republic. They forage for edible plants, set up encampments in the rain forests, and engage in ritual dances and elaborate polyphonic songs. To Westerners, their ways may seem bizarre, mysterious, or even strangely beautiful.[9] They also don't have a word in their language for "masturbation".[10] It is simply not part of their cultural model of sexuality.

Contrast this with men in Western society: 25 percent of adult men say they masturbate daily or several times a week; 55 percent say they masturbate daily to monthly; and about half of boys fourteen to seventeen years old masturbate at least twice a week. Escaping into sexual fantasy is the norm.[11]

What is the impact of this lifestyle of fantasy, this habit of escaping into a mental world of sexual pleasure? In a letter to a friend, Oxford scholar C. S. Lewis offered some insights about masturbation. He said that a man's sexual appetite is meant to lead him out of himself, to lead him into being a self-gift that both completes and corrects his personality—first by sharing whole-life oneness with a lover and second by procreating children. With masturbation, however, the appetite is turned in on itself and "sends the man back into the prison of himself, there to keep a harem of imaginary brides".[12]

What is the harm in this? Lewis says that the problem with masturbation is that a man comes to prefer his fantasy world to reality,

> for the harem is always accessible, always subservient, calls for no sacrifices or adjustments, and can

be endowed with erotic and psychological attractions which no woman can rival.

Among those shadowy brides, he is always adored, always the perfect lover; no demand is made on his unselfishness, no mortification ever imposed on his vanity.

In the end, they become merely the medium through which he increasingly adores himself. . . . After all, almost the main work of life is to come out of our selves, out of the little dark prison we are all born in. Masturbation is to be avoided as all things are to be avoided that retard this process. The danger is that of coming to love the prison.[13]

14. Porn prevents rape and sexual violence.

The American feminist movement of the 1980s was dominated by a figure whom the media often placed front and center: Andrea Dworkin. Those not old enough to remember, or those removed enough not to care, might not be familiar with Dworkin's legacy, but she left a permanent mark on the feminist movement and on American politics.

Outwardly Dworkin embodied to many a feminist archetype: an obese woman with unruly hair and overalls, infuriated about the violence done to women around the world. Like an Old Testament prophet, she raged against pornography, and the media both loved and hated her for it. A dynamic communicator, Dworkin fought tooth and nail against pornography because she deemed it the sexualization of male power over women.

In 1986, she was a star witness before the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography. She urged the commission to recognize the vital connection between porn and sexual violence. "Pornography is used in rape—to plan it, to execute it, to choreograph it, to engender the excitement to commit the act," she said to the commission.[1] Pornography production and dissemination, in Dworkin's mind, was a civil rights issue, and in order to protect women, there had to be stricter legislation against it.

Since Dworkin's time, a lot has changed. In the last thirty years, Dworkin and other feminists have been criticized for ignoring evidence about the impact of porn on society. Today, many claim that porn does not cause rape and sexual violence but actually prevents them.

Todd D. Kendall, economics professor at Clemson University, argues, "Potential rapists perceive pornography as a substitute for rape." His evidence? The advent of the World Wide Web has brought pornography to the masses in unprecedented ways, making porn more accessible, affordable, and anonymous than Dworkin or her supporters would have ever thought possible. Since Internet access has spread, rape rates, Kendall claims, have declined, but other crime rates have not.[2]

Anthony D'Amato, Leighton professor of law at Northwestern University, agrees: "The sharp rise in access to pornography accounts for the decline in rape. The correlation is inverse: the more pornography, the less rape." States that adopted the Internet sooner saw a greater and faster decline in rape than other

states. D'Amato further makes this unqualified claim: "No scientist had ever found that pornography raised the probability of rape."[3]

For some, this makes intuitive sense. If you are the kind of man who wants to rape a woman, perhaps sitting at home and masturbating to porn more or less gets it out of your system.

It should be made clear at the outset: the argument that porn causes all men to commit violent sex crimes is clearly false, and no serious critic of pornography would make such a claim. More men consume porn now than ever before, and yet most porn-watching men would shudder at the thought of violently raping a woman. Pornography is not a sufficient or necessary condition for rape.

There are, however, several reasons why we should be skeptical of the idea that porn actually prevents sexual violence.

- First, a supposed decline in rape can also be correlated to other factors, such as more education about rape and sexual violence or greater measures of protection for women—none of which are reasons explored by these studies.

- Second, claims that rape prevalence is in rapid decline, as reported by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), are based on poor data collection. The National Women's Study, the National College Women Sexual Victimization Study, the National Violence against Women Study, and the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey all report higher rates of rape and sexual assault than the NCVS. The National Research Council has found multiple problems with the ways rape data has been collected by the NCVS.[4] Rape and sexual assault are, unfortunately, grossly underreported.

So, what is the connection between porn and sexual violence? That is a question with a complicated answer, but many have explored it.

I remember watching with eager attention Ted Bundy's last interview, given only hours before his execution. This man, who had confessed to the murder of thirty women—though the actual number is still unknown—said that pornography played a significant role in his becoming the man he was: a kidnapper, serial rapist, and necrophile. In the middle of the interview, he made this bone-chilling statement:

> I'm no social scientist, and I don't pretend to believe what John Q. Citizen thinks about this, but I've lived in prison for a long time now, and I've met a lot of men who were motivated to commit violence. Without exception, every one of them was deeply involved in pornography—deeply

consumed by the addiction.[5]

Bundy's confession has been sensationalized by popular media and criticized by many as a final publicity stunt—the cop-out of a madman. But taken at face value, Bundy's testimony only confirms what many believe is true: there are certain people with pathologies who, given free access to porn, can and will be inspired to act out their morbid pornographic fantasies through violent crimes.

But what about the rest of us—the vast majority of us who will never kidnap, sodomize, or violently rape women? Professor Gail Dines clarifies what she believes is the impact of porn on the general public: "I am not saying that a man reads porn and goes out to rape, but what I do know is that porn gives permission to its consumers to treat women as they are treated in porn."[6] Her own research has led her to believe that pornography can: (1) be an important factor in shaping a male-dominant view of sexuality; (2) be used to initiate victims and break down their resistance to unwanted sexual activity; (3) contribute to a user's difficulty in separating sexual fantasy from reality; and (4) provide a training manual for abusers.[7]

We know that men take sexual cues from pornography because they indicate as much from surveys. One report found that 53 percent of the men said that porn had "inspired" them.[8] Another study found that men who regularly use pornography, compared with men who don't, are disproportionately more likely to be involved in date rape and other forms of sexual aggression.[9]

And this issue goes beyond those men who break the law. Professor Robert Jensen challenges us to think beyond the traditional legal categories, offering the following examples:

- men who do not rape but would be willing to rape if they were sure they would not be punished

- men who do not rape but will not intervene when another man rapes

- men who do not rape but buy sex with women who have been, or likely will be, raped in the context of being prostituted

- men who do not rape but will watch films of women in situations that depict rape or rape-like acts

- men who do not rape but find the idea of rape sexually arousing

- men who do not rape but whose sexual arousal depends on feeling dominant and having power over a woman

- men who do not rape but routinely masturbate to pornography in which women are presented as objectified bodies whose primary, or only, function is to provide sexual pleasure for men[10]

These men are not guilty of rape, but that fact should hardly comfort us.

Should we congratulate a man who says, "Well, I've never raped anybody"? Is this the essence of mature manhood—not raping women? Even if a porn consumer never commits an act of overt sexual violence against a woman—and many do not—he is at the very least hurting himself as he sits alone at home getting off to degrading fantasies in which women are objectified at best and violently violated at worst.

In recent years, the concept of "rape myths" has worked its way into discussions about violence against women. Rape myths are pervasive beliefs that reduce one's overall empathy for rape victims or even lead one to blame victims for their assault. Here are some examples:

- "She didn't fight it, so it wasn't rape."

- "She went home with him, so it wasn't rape."

- "She said no but really meant yes."

- "Did you see what she was wearing? She was asking for it."

Many studies show that pornography and rape-myth acceptance go hand in hand. In a meta-analysis of forty-six studies published from 1962 to 1995, researchers concluded that consuming pornographic material correlates to a 31 percent increase in the risk of accepting rape myths.[11] Other studies have made similar conclusions.[12]

Should we be surprised that pornography would encourage rape myths? Andrea Dworkin's words, written more than two decades ago, still ring true: "The premises of pornography are controlling in every rape and every rape case."[13] Note what she claims here: she is not saying that pornography itself is the instigator behind every rape, but that the premises of pornography are the same premises internalized by the men who rape—whether these rapists have seen pornography or not.

What are the "premises" of pornography? Again, Dworkin shares her observations:

> The only words we hear in pornography from women are that women want to be hurt, ask to be hurt, like to be raped, get sexual pleasure from sexual violence; and even when a woman is covered in filth, we are supposed to believe that her speech is that she likes it and she wants more of it.[14]

This is far from an overstatement. The nature of pornography remains essentially the same, if it is not becoming more violent, since Dworkin's assessment. In 2007, researchers analyzed the top-selling pornographic DVDs, viewing 304 sex scenes in total. Here is what they found:

- Taken together, the scenes contained 3,376 acts of verbal or physical aggression—that's an act of aggression every minute and a half, on average.

- About 88 percent of scenes contained at least one act of physical aggression, such as slapping, gagging, hair pulling, or spanking.

- Verbal aggression was present in about half (48.7 percent) of the scenes.

- In 73 percent of instances of aggression, men were the aggressors; when women were the aggressors, most of the time they were being aggressive to another woman.

- In 95 percent of the scenes, the person receiving the aggression reacted neutrally or positively to it.

- Positive or healthy sexual acts, such as kissing or compliments, were found in only 10 percent of scenes.[15]

Keep in mind: this is from the top-selling pornographic content. This is what makes pornographers money; this is the material that the fans demand and that is proliferated online for millions to consume.

Lastly, consider in all of this the connections between pornography and sex trafficking. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act sees sex trafficking as a "severe form" of human trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion.[16] Millions around the globe are victims of this crime. Ernie Allen, president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, conservatively estimates that there are at least a hundred thousand U.S.

children per year used for the purpose of sex trafficking.[17]

"Pornography is a brilliant social marketing campaign for commercial sexual exploitation," says Laura Lederer, former senior advisor on human trafficking for the U.S. State Department.[18] Lederer says that porn is marketing for sex trafficking in two powerful ways. First, it serves as direct online and offline marketing as traffickers use pornographic images to draw buyers. Second, porn has an influence on the culture at large, whetting men's appetites for sex that few women are willing to give—unless they are paid or forced.

Interviews with johns demonstrate this: they have developed a thirst for a form of sexuality based on dominance and subordination. Consider these quotes collected from johns:

- "You can pick who you like, it's like going to a vending machine."
- "Guys get off on controlling women, they use physical power to control women, really. If you look at it, it's paid rape."
- "Prostitution is an act of force, not love. She gives up the right to say no."
- "Prostitution says that women have less value than men."
- "I paid for this. You have no rights. You're with me now."
- "I think about getting even [during prostitution]—it's like a kid's game, you're scoring points."[19]

When hundreds of prostituted women from nine countries were interviewed, 47 percent of the respondents said they were upset by johns' attempts to make them do what the johns had previously seen in pornography.[20] Another study found that 86 percent of prostitutes say that johns show them pornography in order to illustrate specific acts they want them to perform.[21] Another study found that men who buy sex are far more likely to say they get their sex education from pornography. The study reports that over time, as a result of their prostitution and pornography use, sex buyers' sexual preferences change: they begin to seek more and more sadomasochistic sex. For the millions of men willing to pay for the services of women coerced or forced into prostitution, pornography is their training ground.[22]

Whatever we might say about the exact relationship of porn to sexual violence, it should be clear that in order for men to violate a woman's body,

some part of them must first believe she is an object to be used rather than a person to be respected—and porn is quite possibly the most powerful means of delivering that belief.

15. Porn isn't addictive.

The media, it seems, never tire of talking about the latest celebrity sex addict. Tiger Woods, Charlie Sheen, Michael Douglas, David Duchovny, and many others have been branded by the media as sex addicts. In 2009 VH1 premiered *Sex Rehab with Dr. Drew*, a reality show featuring sex addicts of all stripes: former porn stars, models, musicians, film directors, wakeboarders, butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers (just kidding on the last three). Sex addiction, it seems, is as common as alcoholism in Hollywood.

The concept of "sex addiction" has been around for a long time. Sigmund Freud considered masturbation the original addiction—something common to us all—and that all other addictions were a substitute or replacement for it.

Many, however, doubt that sex or porn can truly be addictive. Sexual pleasure is, after all, as natural as the day is long. Sex is not something we inject into our veins or snort up our noses. People may use sex in unhealthy ways, but sex addiction, they claim, is a total fiction.

Dr. David J. Ley believes that sex addiction is an imaginary disorder, and his 2012 book, *The Myth of Sex Addiction*, attempts to explain why. Ley agrees with other therapists that people do engage in relationally destructive behavior when it comes to sex.[1] Yes, people habitually look at porn behind their spouses' backs, they cheat, they lie, they go to prostitutes—but none of these behaviors alone is a marker of addiction. What many call sex addiction, he says, is just being human. Human beings enjoy sex, some of us enjoy taboo sex, and, when horny, all of us can make stupid choices. Sex addiction, he says, is just pathologizing high libido and socially unacceptable sexual behavior.

Psychotherapist and certified sex therapist Dr. Marty Klein agrees:

> I don't use the diagnosis of sex addiction. In thirty-one years as a sex therapist, marriage counselor, and psychotherapist, I've never seen sex addiction. I've heard about virtually every sexual variation, obsession, fantasy, trauma, and involvement with sex workers, but I've never seen sex addiction.
>
> New patients tell me all the time how they can't keep from doing self-destructive sexual things; still, I see no sex addiction. Instead, I see people regretting the sexual choices they make, often denying that these are decisions. I see people wanting to change, but not wanting to give up what makes them feel alive or young or loved or adequate; wanting the advantages of changing, but not wanting to give up what makes them feel they're better or sexier or naughtier than other people. Most importantly, I see people wanting to stop doing what makes them feel powerful, attractive, or loved,

> but since they don't want to stop feeling powerful, attractive, or loved, they can't seem to stop the repetitive sex clumsily designed to create those feelings.[2]

For seven years the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) included "sexual addiction" under the general diagnosis "Sexual Disorder Not Otherwise Specified", but it was removed later because of "insufficient research". Since its removal, the American Psychological Association has not recognized sex addiction as a diagnosis.[3] Dr. Ley says the reason is simple: the science doesn't support it. After all, there are already plenty of classified disorders that include a hypersexual component. These are often the problems that undergird and drive what many experience as sex addiction. Why do we need an additional diagnosis, an additional disease to add to the mix?

It is true that not every person who cheats on a spouse should use the label "sex addict" as an excuse—what is often labeled an addiction is just a person's selfishness. It is also correct that there are often other underlying issues that drive someone's unhealthy sexual habits.

Writing off the idea that sex can be addictive, however, simply doesn't line up with modern addiction medicine. Dr. Robert Weiss comments about Dr. Ley's theories:

> Dr. Ley seems to be of the opinion that since sex does not introduce a foreign substance into the human body, it can't be an addiction. Yet gambling is commonly recognized as an addiction, one that is listed in the DSM (as pathological gambling), and no foreign substance is introduced there. Gambling addiction, like sex addiction, is all about fantasy, euphoria, and emotional escape.
>
> Dr. Ley is equally misinformed about the nature of sex addiction. (In fact, he seems to not understand the nature of addiction in general.) He states: "There's no evidence of a tolerance effect with sex. An orgasm never stops feeling good." What Dr. Ley fails to understand is that sex addiction is not about orgasm per se, much like gambling addiction is not about winning or losing.
>
> Like all process or behavioral addictions, sex addiction is a process that utilizes fantasy-based euphoria and ritualistic behavior to escape and/or manage what feel like intolerable emotions, stressors, and psychological conditions. Sex addicts engage in their addictive behaviors as a temporary distraction from loneliness, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and other triggers related to past emotional and/or physical trauma.[4]

In order to understand why sex can become an addiction, one first needs to understand why things like drugs are addictive. The very reason drugs are addictive at all is because they "trick" the brain: they activate the brain's natural neural pathways, which are involved in reinforcement and pleasure. Neuroscientist Dr. William Struthers says that pornography "hijacks" the brain in the same way: it tricks the brain into thinking it is getting sex—and like a

drug, the forced high can become a deadly habit.[5] In other words, pornography can make us addicted to our own neurochemistry. Pornography triggers powerful neurotransmitters such as epinephrine—also known as adrenaline—dopamine, and others, so that when pornography is used compulsively, it becomes addictive. In 2011, the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) modified its definition of addiction, saying that it is "a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry". This new definition now includes, for the first time, behavioral addictions—not merely substance abuse. This is why the ASAM now considers sex addiction a possibility: though sex is naturally neurologically rewarding, someone addicted to sex is engaged in the "pathological pursuit of rewards".[6]

Dopamine is the primary neurotransmitter (brain drug) involved in the reward pathways in the brain. Dopamine is involved in our cravings for food, exercise, and sex. According to Neurosurgeon Dr. Donald L. Hilton:

> Dopamine is essential for humans to desire and value appropriate pleasure in life. Without it, we would not be as incentivized to eat, procreate, or even to try to win a game.
>
> It's the overuse of the dopamine reward system that causes addiction. When the pathways are used compulsively, a downgrading occurs that actually decreases the amount of dopamine in the pleasure areas available for use, and the dopamine cells themselves start to atrophy, or shrink. The reward cells in the nucleus accumbens are now starved for dopamine and exist in a state of dopamine craving, as a downgrading of dopamine receptors on the pleasure cells occurs as well. This resetting of the "pleasure thermostat" produces a "new normal." In this addictive state, the person must act out in addiction to boost the dopamine to levels sufficient just to feel normal.[7]

What does this mean? It means that just like a drug addiction, porn addiction causes a person over time to use the substance more and more. The porn addict needs to watch more porn or more hard-core porn to get the same high he could get with smaller doses.

Dr. Eric Nestler, head of neuroscience research at Mount Cedar Sinai in New York, agrees. In his 2005 paper for the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, he said that the dopamine reward system is involved in not only drug addiction but also "natural addiction"—that is, the compulsive consumption of a natural reward, such as the pleasure of eating food or having sex.[8]

Added to all of this is one of the biggest components of modern porn addiction: the Internet. To date, there have been well over a hundred studies showing the impact of overuse of the Internet on the brain. Internet overuse has been shown to impair cognitive function, decision-making, information integration, working memory, and impulse control.[9]

Moreover, sex and porn addicts show all the telltale signs of addiction: tolerance, withdrawal symptoms (such as irritability, violent dreams, mania, insomnia, violent mood swings, paranoia, headaches, anxiety, and depression), desensitization, and repeated failed attempts to quit, despite the negative consequences of their behavior.

Sex and porn addictions are realities, and just as with alcoholism or drug addiction, the label “addict” does not excuse a person for his actions. Addiction is slavery, to be sure, but it is a chosen slavery. Addicts find freedom not by denying the power that porn has over them, not by denying that their addiction is real, but by admitting it to others and asking for help.

16. Erotica is a healthy alternative to hard-core porn.

In 2011, the erotic novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* was released. In March 2012, it hit the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list, where it would stay for thirty weeks.[1] News agencies labeled it "mommy porn", and some said that, coupled with the perceived discretion of e-readers, it completely changed the way women consume porn.[2] People might be hesitant to sit in a public area with an erotic book in full view, but when they are simply staring at words on a screen, no one can tell whether they are reading sadomasochistic material or *War and Peace*.

While the *Fifty Shades* craze was in full swing, a movie featuring a shirtless, sculpted Channing Tatum hit the box offices. *Magic Mike* netted almost $40 million during its opening weekend.[3] Women flocked to see it. As one writer said, "We are in the golden age of mom porn. The *Fifty Shades* trilogy has surpassed 10 million copies sold worldwide, and *Magic Mike* is looking to become the biggest R-rated, G-stringed movie of all time. It's literally a mom pornucopia."[4] This one-two punch in support of women's rights to sexual expression sparked debate over cultural double standards on sexuality, and it peeled back a corner of a world not often discussed—erotica and softcore pornography.

Erotica has been around for thousands of years. Strictly speaking, the term is used to describe sexually explicit material—whether in painting, photography, sculpture, or literature—that is perceived to be tasteful. This form of art, while it can result in the sexual arousal of the viewer, is ultimately defined by a desire to elevate sexuality to something captivating and beautiful.[5]

Today, when the average person mentions erotica, he is not talking about Michelangelo's *David*. More than likely, he is talking about a mild form of pornography. It's not hard-core, because it doesn't blatantly show certain aspects of sexuality, and it may involve an element of intellect and romance. The line between erotica and pornography, especially softcore, is often blurred, and the two overlap.[6][7]

Like the line between erotica and pornography, the line between softcore and hard-core pornography is also undefined. Softcore, like hard-core, consists of film and photographed images. Unlike hard-core pornography, softcore does not generally show genitalia and may use strategic camera angles and prop

placement to hide body parts. Still, "someone who is unused to viewing pornography may view some softcore works as hard-core. An individual who regularly consumes porn may feel that some porn in the hard-core category is actually softcore."[8]

Take, for instance, pro-sex porn movements such as Make Love Not Porn. This movement recognizes pornography itself is a poor sexual educator. So, instead of showcasing mainstream pornography with its bronzed, big-busted blondes, Make Love Not Porn showcases "real sex" between real couples in order to show viewers what real sex is like and how it differs from the sex in the porn industry.[9] This may seem like a healthy alternative to aggressive and misogynistic mainstream pornography.

In this sense, both erotica and softcore pornography have existed for millennia. In the nineteenth century, so-called French postcards were a type of precursor to *Playboy*, which was originally softcore pornography.[10] Since it predates the Internet and is missing many of the aggressive elements that make up hard-core pornography, it may seem to be a healthier alternative. After all, it is only words, or only pictures. But does that really mean it is a healthier choice?

If we take *Fifty Shades of Grey* as an example, the answer would be no, for a number of reasons. Since its publication, much has been said about the violent nature of the sex portrayed in *Fifty Shades*. Although we might think that words are not as damaging as pictures, it turns out they can be. In a recent study, psychologists found that women who read *Fifty Shades of Grey* were more likely to accept behaviors found in abusive relationships. Among other things, the women were 25 percent more likely to have verbally abusive partners. Those tendencies may have existed before they read the book or as a result of reading the book, but either way, the book clearly endorses the beliefs that undergird abusive relationships.[11] It turns out that words can be just as effective as pictures and movies when it comes to normalizing abusive behavior.

A study published in the *Journal of Women's Health* found that emotional abuse is present in nearly every interaction in *Fifty Shades*, including stalking, intimidation, isolation, and the use of alcohol to compromise consent. The main character, Anastasia, experiences the typical reactions of an abused woman, including nausea induced by the sense of menace she experiences in her sexual encounters.[12]

Some might say that *Fifty Shades* is an extreme form of erotica. But the novel got its start as a piece of online fan fiction, a form of writing that is often highly sexual in nature. Fan fiction has been called a phenomenon of the digital age, with millions of authors worldwide.[13] Its authors essentially write spinoff stories

based on characters from popular movies, books, or TV shows. *Fifty Shades of Grey* was originally published as *Twilight* fan fiction. (And it's worth noting that *Twilight* also received some flak for normalizing an abusive sexual relationship.[14]) To the casual observer, fan fiction might seem harmless. There is nothing wrong with amateur authors practicing story writing with existing characters or public figures. But fan-fiction stories are typically not tame by any stretch of the imagination. On one popular fan-fiction site, roughly 75 percent of the stories are sexual in nature.[15] "When Disney was trying to promulgate the story that the Jonas Brothers were strict Christians who wore rings to symbolize their commitment to not putting it about, fan fiction sites were full of stories of girls being ravished by the band in incestuous foursomes."[16]

But why does it matter? Shouldn't we celebrate creativity and allow people to express themselves sexually?

Fifty Shades of Grey is a perfect example of a piece of erotic / pornographic literature that went mainstream. It is the fastest-selling paperback ever.[17] After this piece of "mommy porn" was turned into a movie (rated R, mind you), sex stores saw an increase in sex-toy sales—and not just any sex toys but bondage sex toys, just like those used in the book, and, subsequently, the movie. One store reported a 92 percent increase in sales of such toys, and as one customer said, "The book definitely inspired me. I want to buy the handcuffs, the beads, the feather. It was all so hot."[18]

So, instead of asking whether erotica is a healthier alternative to pornography, perhaps you should be asking whether it is an alternative at all.

17. Anime porn is great because it doesn't involve real people.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit? was a box-office success in 1988. It would become the first animated film to win multiple Academy Awards since *Mary Poppins*. The film is, in many ways, a comical celebration of the golden age of American animation, and it continues to be praised as one of the most creative live-action—animation hybrid films of all time.

And then there was the character Jessica Rabbit, the voluptuous Toon voiced by Kathleen Turner—now likely the most famous animated sex symbol of all time. Full lips, outrageously curvy, and impossibly slender, Jessica tells the main character Eddie, "I'm not bad, I'm just drawn that way."

While Jessica Rabbit might be the most iconic, she is certainly not the only cartoon character created with sex appeal. Consider Wonder Woman, Supergirl, Holli Would, Mystique, Lara Croft, and many more. But when we leave the world of mainstream and jump to the world of pornography, one genre corners the market on cartoon seduction: hentai.

"Hentai" is the Western label given to anime pornography and is derived from the Japanese word for "perverted". "Anime" is a term used for animated productions created in Japan or with a distinctive Japanese comic style. Though hentai has not caught on in the West as quickly as live-action pornography has, interest in hentai among American consumers has increased, thanks to the growing popularity of anime through major distributors such as Disney and Time Warner. Over the last generation, hentai has become some of the most popular pornography in the world. In fact, according to one of the most trafficked porn websites, cartoon porn is currently among the most-searched-for niches of porn on devices such as Android tablets, Windows phones, BlackBerry phones,[1] and the Nintendo Wii.[2] For those who've never seen such films, the notion of masturbating to animated creatures might sound like something outside the norm, but hentai's popularity demonstrates that it is far from a sideline fetish.

Mainstream human anime characters are easily recognizable to anyone who has seen them: outsized eyes, lively and often colorful hair, small facial features—though there are notable exceptions to these generalizations. Capitalizing on these familiar features, hentai films combine these animation styles with erotic

undertones or, more often, explicit cartoon sex.

It might be easy to justify the consumption of hentai over other kinds of pornography, because hentai's creators, unlike those of your standard smut, have some obvious artistic ability, and unlike live-action porn, hentai has no real actors (except for voice actors). For these reasons, anime porn is often labeled "art" or "ethical porn".

We should affirm that it is a good thing when no women are physically harmed or degraded in the making of any kind of media—especially when compared with live-action porn that routinely abuses its performers. But it is also important to note that just because something is better than something else in one respect, that does not mean it is therefore good. Smoking one carton of cigarettes a day might be better than smoking ten, but smoking one carton should not be labeled "healthy".

To assess the hentai genre, we need to look more closely at the values it communicates.

First, while hentai has some artistic aspects, inviting viewers to consider the creative styles and methods of depiction, it is quite transparent in its aim—its creators intend not just to arouse but to bring people to orgasm. For this reason, it is not just nude art like Michelangelo's *David*. It is clearly pornographic. Unlike nude art, anime porn is not meant merely to be appreciated. Like live-action porn, hentai is meant to be consumed.

Second, anime porn is infused with the same message seen in live-action porn: the degradation and objectification of women for the masturbatory pleasure of men. The female figure is nothing more than an object for male pleasure—if not in the film itself, certainly in the audience that consumes it. Women are portrayed as powerless—either powerless over male advances or powerless over their own sexual euphoria that compels them to be dominated. When women are portrayed as powerful, it is mostly for the sake of dominating another woman. Like other forms of pornography, hentai draws attention to specific body parts in order to provoke arousal and portray women and girls in vulnerable positions.

Third, anime porn is marketed and sold with the same style of messaging as its live-action counterpart. Legal websites offer warnings that the material is only for adult audiences. Terms to describe both female anatomy and the female herself are as common on hentai websites as they are on other porn sites: "sluts", "whores", "hussies", and a host of even worse terms are used to describe the beautiful animated creatures that await the consumer on the other side of the payment gateway.

Fourth and most disturbing, there is a sense in which the material consumed is actually worse in its messaging than live-action porn because characters and

scenarios are completely malleable. Clinical psychologist Dr. Megha Hazuria Gore says, “Because toons are a kind of final fantasy, you can make the person look the way you want him or her to look. Every fetish can be fulfilled.”[3] Characters can be portrayed with exaggerated physical attributes and in physically impossible poses. Hentai incorporates themes found in classic Japanese erotica, such as rape by a monstrous creature, mixing elements of abuse, bestiality, and horror.

We find in hentai subgenres similar to what is found in live-action illegal pornography, but because no actual children or animals are used in the creation of the material, it is legal. Lolicon, for instance, is a subgenre of hentai featuring prepubescent girls, and shotacon features prepubescent boys. Can we commend the makers and consumers of this material because they don’t use real children, because they are “only” erotic fantasies of children?

Moreover, because the films are animated, the consumer need not feel any compassion for a character, because she isn’t real. As a lifeless scribbling of ink, she has no rights and no choice and is therefore subject to the creator’s impulses. Meanwhile, much as with other forms of pornography, the viewers shape their own sexual tastes, expectations, and fetishes.

The effect is so disarming and the medium is so malleable, unlike other forms of pornography, that the user has the potential to become the producer. Given enough artistic ability or access to computer technologies, the hentai fan can create his very own fan-fiction porn around his favorite characters (called *doujinshi* in Japan). This brings the consumer even deeper into a position of sexual power—he is the creator of a whole universe of male dominance.

PORN AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS

18. Porn is only fantasy: it doesn't affect our real lives.

For years, the debate about media's effect on real-life behavior has been in the spotlight. What role might violent media play in our lives? Can what we see on screen, no matter how obviously made up it may be, actually influence how we behave? How does exposure to violence affect our maturity? How does it affect our society?

These questions carry over into the debate about the effects of pornography. Does pornography alter human behavior? Does it really make a difference? Do images actually have that much power over us? The resounding answer, proven by countless studies, is that media does affect how we think and how we behave.

The advertising industry is proof that media has a powerful influence over our thoughts. Companies invest billions in advertising campaigns in the hopes that their thirty seconds of great graphics and catchy jingles will be enough to get you thinking about, buying, and then talking about their products. Their products might not be much different from a competitor's, but the goal of their advertising campaign is for you to choose theirs. Companies spend an estimated $180 billion on advertising each year.[1] Executives are literally banking on the fact that advertising brings customers. Media changes minds.

You may be thinking, "Well, sure, that's advertising. It's not the same as pornography. Pornography is different. After all, pornography is not real. It is fantasy, and we know that. It is just harmless fun and safer than engaging in risky sexual activities."

It is true that most pornography is scripted and heavily edited, but that does not lessen its effects on the viewer, his body, and his relationships.

To understand the full extent of pornography's power to alter our sexual behavior, we have to understand how the human mind learns. Humans engage in a process called observational learning. We learn to do something by watching it being done.

In one of the first studies of observational learning, children watched an adult act aggressively toward an inflatable punching bag—throwing it in the air, hitting it with a mallet, and sitting on it. When given an opportunity to play with the same punching bag, the children who had witnessed the adult's aggressive behavior tended to copy it.

Observational learning can be seen in how pornography use affects the

behavior of its viewers. In Norway, a group of researchers has recognized the teaching power of pornography. They are calling for reform in the porn industry for the purpose of teaching safe sex. They believe that average pornography consumers cannot be taught about sex using traditional methods (i.e., a sex education class) and that promoting "safe sex" pornographic films may be an effective way of normalizing safe sex.[2] If educators believe that pornography can teach safe sex, then it is certainly capable of teaching other lessons—including aggression.

Pornography's ties to sexual aggression have been the subject of many studies, articles, and debates over the last several decades. Some studies claim to prove a link, others claim to disprove it, and still others say that both pornography use and sexual aggression are affected by a man's natural tendency.

Perhaps the most telling of all these studies is one from 2000 entitled "Pornography and Sexual Aggression" by Malamuth, Addison, and Koss. In preparation for their research, the authors reviewed past studies on the issue.

One part of their study focused on the effect of pornography on males who were low-risk for sexual aggression and males who were high-risk. It found that high pornography use is not necessarily indicative of high sexual aggression in the low-risk population. There was little difference between the aggressive tendencies of low-risk men who used porn somewhat frequently and those who used it very frequently, although there was a notable difference between men who had never or seldom viewed pornography and men who viewed it frequently. In the case of men at high risk for sexual aggressiveness, however, there was a relationship between porn and sexual violence. The high-use men in this group "were much more likely" than the low-use men to have engaged in sexual aggression.[3]

Viewing pornography can affect not only a man's sexual aggressiveness but also his commitment to a relationship. Researchers at Florida State University studied college students who admitted to habitual pornography viewing. Half of the students were asked to give up pornography in any form; the other half were asked to give up their favorite food. At the end of the trial, the students were asked about their commitment to their relationships. The correlation might seem strange, but researchers found that the students who reduced or eliminated pornography consumption were much more committed to their relationships than the students who had continued to view pornography while giving up food.[4]

What caused the difference? It could have been the lack of pornography's influence, or it could have been the increased time available to spend with a partner. After all, every moment someone is not viewing porn is another moment

he has to engage in real human interaction. Some porn users report that they watch up to fifteen hours of pornography a week.[5] That is a significant chunk of time lost.

Pornography's effects reach beyond our ability to form and to maintain meaningful relationships. Pornography can also affect how we view sex and members of the opposite sex, particularly how men view women. In a study on the sexualization of women, researchers analyzed covers of *Rolling Stone* magazine. They discovered that women are not only sexualized but are hypersexualized at an increasing rate, often featured naked and in sexually suggestive poses. In 1960, 11 percent of the cover images were classified as hypersexualized. By contrast, since 2000, 61 percent of the covers featured hypersexual images, a majority of which were women. To quote the authors of the study:

> The accumulation of sexualized attributes in these images leaves little room for observers to interpret [the women] in any way other than as instruments of sexual pleasure and visual possession for a heterosexual male audience. Such images do not show women as sexually agentic musicians and actors; rather, they show female actors and musicians as ready and available for sex.[6]

The problem with such mainstreamed images is that they feign to represent women as a whole. In her book *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*, Ariel Levy states that picturing women in such a way gives rise to the message that being a sex object is the only way to be a woman. "What we once regarded as a kind of sexual expression," says Levy, "we now view as sexuality."[7] In other words, hypersexualization sends the message that "real" women are ready and available for sex. It holds up unrealistic standards for women and plants improper expectations in the minds of men.

Another effect of pornography is its impact on the human body. With the increasing availability of pornography has come an increase in the number of cases of sexual performance issues, such as erectile dysfunction (ED), among young men. Problems that were once found mostly in older men are now found in otherwise healthy men in their twenties and thirties.

Here's some of the data on this phenomenon. A 2012 Swiss study found that 30 percent of males ages eighteen to twenty-four have some form of ED,[8] and a Canadian study published a couple of years later reported that 27 percent of sixteen- to twenty-one-year-olds have this problem.[9] An Italian study reports that young men under forty are actually 10 percent more likely to have ED than men over forty.[10] Compare this with data from 1992, when only 5 percent of guys ages eighteen to fifty-nine had ED.[11] Why the sudden uptick in ED among

healthy young men? Doctors believe that porn is a major reason. One study from Cambridge University in 2014 asked men with ED about their use of pornography. Researchers reported that 60 percent of the subjects (average age twenty-five) said they had ED problems with sexual partners but not with porn.[12]

Lawrence Smiley, a physician who specializes in men's reproductive health, says:

> I see men almost every day in my sexual dysfunction practice in exactly this situation. They have developed over time, the inability to easily get a good solid erection with their partner and sometimes find it difficult to ejaculate with their partner. I advise these men to dramatically cut out the pornography they watch and after a few months their erections and ability to ejaculate with their partners almost always returns to normal for them.[13]

Online porn viewing is, among other things, novelty-seeking behavior: constantly clicking, greedily keeping multiple tabs open, always looking for the next girl, the next sexual buzz. A real woman—no matter how attractive—is only one woman. A man this obsessed will have difficulty finding her arousing.

Can the fantasy of pornography affect our everyday lives? The answer seems to be yes.

19. Married life will cure us of our porn obsessions.

Many single men and women hooked on porn will say, “Once I get married, this won’t be a problem anymore.” They think that once they have a readily available sexual partner, porn will lose its pull. Maybe they think that being committed to someone will be a strong enough motivation to kick the habit.

This expectation shows a failure to understand what an obsession with porn really is.

One of my favorite philosophers is the seventeenth-century French polymath Blaise Pascal. Pascal spoke of the pathology of the compulsive gambler. Is it merely the money he desires? No, because if you simply gave the compulsive gambler what he might win—on the condition that he couldn’t gamble anymore—he wouldn’t take it (or else would lie and use it to gamble anyway). Nor is the compulsive gambler merely addicted to playing the game. Without the prospect of the winnings, the game would cease to be amusing. Rather, what captivates the gambler is the fantasy that winning will make him happy. It is not the big win but the hope for the big win that the gambler craves. But when he wins, his contentment does not last, and he moves on to the next diversion.

Married life no more cures a porn addiction than winning the lottery cures a gambling addiction. A person so trained on the pornographic experience isn’t merely after a good orgasm. He is hooked on the anticipation of what comes next, the rush of moving from one object of desire to the next, one body to the next, always looking to trade the one in front of his eyes for what he hopes will be the ultimate sexual experience.

Unless there is deep change, a person hooked on this kind of experience will not be cured by marriage. Instead, the porn obsession just might destroy the marriage.

There have been several studies on the effects of porn on the human perception of sex. One important effect is how extramarital sex is viewed. Pornography displays extramarital sex as exciting, and that display can lead the viewer to accept extramarital sex as normal. That poses a problem for those in committed relationships, especially since adultery is cited as one of the leading causes for divorce in America.[1] Pornography makes one feel that extramarital sex, or sex outside of a committed relationship, is acceptable. Spouses and partners, however, often disagree.

Nearly every year for the last decade, there have been one million divorces in America. In 2003, a survey of 350 divorce lawyers revealed that porn use was a factor in more than half of their divorce cases. Exactly how many marriages are ended because of a porn habit is uncertain, but according to Dr. Kevin Skinner, author of *Treating Porn Addiction: Essential Tools for Recovery*, "If even 25% of the 500,000 divorce cases are due to porn, that is 125,000 divorces each and every year that are a direct result of pornography. That's too many broken homes. That's too much hurt and pain."[2]

On paper, marriage as a cure for pornography can make sense. If pornography is only a way to relieve sexual tension, only a way to express oneself sexually, then marriage or a committed relationship should be the answer. But all too often it isn't. Instead, after getting into a committed relationship, porn users continue using, at the risk of losing the relationship and their reputation.

But why? Why isn't marriage the cure-all for porn addiction? The answer lies in the nature of a pornography obsession. If you think that pornography is "just sex", then marriage or even a committed romantic relationship would seem to be the perfect alternative. Instead of turning to virtual sex on the screen, one can choose to engage in real intimacy with a partner. Often, though, a porn user makes the opposite choice and turns to virtual sex instead of sex with a partner.

Writer Amy Sohn shares the story of Renata, a woman who broke up with her boyfriend after his porn habit started to destroy their relationship. The longer her boyfriend spent online, the more he wanted sex that mimicked the porn he saw. He even began making demands straight from porn videos. Frustrated that her boyfriend was choosing an unrealistic porn star over a flesh-and-blood woman, Renata gave him a choice. He chose the computer, and their relationship ended.[3]

Women like Renata feel that their partner's porn obsession is really a form of cheating. There has been much discussion about that but little discussion about what happens when it's the woman who views pornography. Pornography habits can be carried into a relationship by either a man or a woman, or both. For men, it seems to result in increasingly deviant sexual behavior, such as the case with Renata's boyfriend. For women, however, it seems to result in decreasing emotional intimacy.

Jenny was a young wife and a mother of two who had been watching pornography since she was a teenager. She thought that marriage would cure her obsession with porn. She would have a man who loved her and accepted her. She would be able to have sex with him whenever she wanted, and he would probably feel like one of the luckiest men in the world for having a wife with a high sex drive. After she got married, however, Jenny's problems got worse. She

continued her porn use and reached a point at which she was unable to be aroused by her husband. Whenever he asked for sex, she would excuse herself to another room to “get ready”. There, she would watch porn. Watching a pornographic film was the only way she could become interested in making love to her husband, and thinking about porn was the only way she could stay interested. Even though she was not sitting in front of the computer at the time, she was still choosing a pornographic image over her husband. She was terrified to tell him, fearing that he would leave her if he found out.

It may seem absurd. Who would willingly give up real sex for masturbating in front of a computer screen? To answer that, we have to look at the effects of pornography on the brain. Pornography and sex are not the same. A porn obsession is not necessarily synonymous with a sex obsession. Marriage might help with the latter, but as the evidence shows, it does not help with the former.

As mentioned before, thinking that marriage will cure a porn addiction is a bit like thinking that money will cure a gambling addiction. In gambling, the addiction is not to the money but to the high that results from chasing the money. Giving a gambling addict money only fuels the habit, because he is addicted to the feeling that gambling gives him.[4]

While not yet officially described as addictive,[5] pornography use triggers the same centers in the brain as drug abuse, gambling, and other behaviors that can become compulsive.[6] Porn addicts are hooked on the high they get from chasing after sexual fantasies. The unrealistic expectations that are fed by porn are what carry over into and destroy relationships, because no person can live up to the on-demand, anything-goes sex depicted in movies. When faced with the inevitable difficulties of establishing and maintaining a human relationship, it is much easier for a porn addict to opt for the instant relief of virtual sex. Marriage will not fix a pornography habit, but a pornography habit will likely destroy a marriage.

20. Men wouldn't turn to porn if their wives were more sexually attentive or prettier.

When a man rushes headlong into porn, this can understandably have a profound impact on his wife. In a study of couples for whom porn had become a serious problem, in 68 percent of these couples, one or both parties had become disinterested in sex. Partners commonly reported feeling hurt, betrayed, rejected, abandoned, lonely, isolated, humiliated, jealous, and angry. Jilted wives often compared themselves with the images their husbands consumed online.[1]

The belief that a wife's sexual rigidity and undesirability cause a man's obsession with porn is not a neurotic fear generated by insecure women. It is something often spoken aloud by husbands themselves. Dr. Linda Hatch, a certified sex-addiction therapist, says that men often believe that their porn use is a direct reaction to something missing in their marriage. "They may say that the problem is that they 'want more sex than my wife' and their reasoning is that if that is the case then they are justified in going outside the marriage or relationship to get sex."[2]

The fact is that nothing could be further from the truth. A desire for sex and a desire for porn, though related, are not the same thing.

Luke Gilkerson, the educational resource manager at Covenant Eyes, often uses this illustration with hurting wives:

> Compare the enjoyment of a fine candlelight dinner to a sub-par, all-you-can-eat buffet with food that's been under the warmers for five hours. If a person chooses the buffet over the candlelight dinner, it is not because the food is actually better. It is because at the buffet he gets variety, volume, novelty, and convenience. This is what draws men to porn over pursuing an intimate relationship with their wives: they want a variety of women, they want to binge, they want novel fantasy experiences, and they don't want the inconvenience of coordinating with another person's sexual desires and wants. It is sexual gluttony at its worst.[3]

Gilkerson clarifies that he doesn't want us to stretch the analogy in the wrong direction: women are not "pieces of meat" or a commodity to be consumed. The analogy is about the mentality of men: Do they see their sexuality as a means of intimacy, or do they treat it as a need for which women perform a valuable service? The man's preference for the subpar buffet over the candlelight dinner is evidence of his warped mentality, not evidence that the candlelight dinner is

flawed.

The porn lover has trained himself to believe that sex should be something on tap and made-to-order. He has bought into Burger King sex: he prefers it his way, right away. The problem is with him, not with his wife.

The fact remains, however: many men simply think monogamy is boring, and if we were all honest with ourselves, we would admit that we all find it a little dull. Should women make a big deal out of something the majority of men do to take the edge off the monotony?

Let's turn the tables on that question. Would you respect a man who chose to be faithful to his wife in all respects—even avoiding pornographic images? Do you silently cheer on the heroes in stories who avoid the snares of lust so they can be faithful to their bride? If yes, then is it wrong for women to long for this kind of virtue in the men they marry?

In his book *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Dr. Norman Doidge says that we have two pleasure systems in our brains: one for exciting pleasure and another for satisfying pleasure. These two pathways of pleasure help to explain why men turn to the excitement of porn, sometimes to the exclusion of marital sex.

Dopamine is the neurochemical that focuses our attention, helping us to become aroused. The exciting-pleasure system, fueled by these bursts of dopamine, stirs our anticipation—such as when we imagine a favorite meal or a sexual encounter. The satisfying-pleasure system involves actually having the meal or having sex, which generates a calming, fulfilling pleasure, releasing opiatelike endorphins in the brain, giving feelings of peace and euphoria.

Porn is all excitement and no satisfaction. Doidge explains that because dopamine responds to things that are new, novel, and varied, Internet porn, with its promise of new sexual encounters around every turn, ramps the brain into high excitement. Viewing porn, therefore, is experienced as more "exciting" because of the novelty of one digital woman after another. However, the satisfying-pleasure system is left starving for the real thing—there's no actual touching, kissing, caressing, or connection.

Novelty. Convenience. These are the ingredients that make porn alluring, and they are the reasons why no woman—no matter how visually stunning—can maintain the focus of a porn-saturated brain.

Pornography is cleverly packaged sexual novelty. Each link presents a virtually endless road marked with thousands of women in thousands of pornographic scenarios. This is why many guys don't just open the laptop, find one image of a woman they find appealing, and be done with it. They keep searching. They spend hours online because it's not just about finding something that sexually stimulates: it's about the search; it's about the options.

Pornography is prefab fantasy and sexual convenience. Relationships can be complicated: they involve truly knowing, caring for, and serving another person at the expense of one's own desires. Pornography, however, is one-sided: the women on the screen have no needs of their own. Even when a man experiences pleasurable sexual intimacy with his wife, the offer of pornography can still be appealing because it offers a shortcut to sexual release without the hassle of interaction.

The sad fact is that many men end up preferring the fantasy to the reality.

Perhaps the best (and worst) example is Hugh Hefner. The founder of *Playboy* magazine, Hefner seeks to emulate the lifestyle he has spent decades promoting. Located near Beverly Hills, California, the Playboy Mansion serves as both Hefner's personal residence and an icon of the Playboy image.

Izabella St. James, one of Hef's former girlfriends, lived with him in the mansion for two years and shares in explicit detail the day-in, day-out happenings of Hef's lifestyle in her book, *Bunny Tales: Behind Closed Doors of the Playboy Mansion*. Her description of Hef's orgies is telling. The icon of sexual liberation needed Viagra, multiple women, and finally pornography in order to experience a sexual climax.[4]

If a harem of real-life porn stars isn't enough to satisfy a porn-imbued libido, what makes us think an average woman can compete?

21. Porn should be used as a sexual aid to enhance intimacy.

I was once invited to speak at the University of Maryland for their annual Sex Week. These weeklong, anything-goes sex education smorgasbords are fairly common at American universities. Peter Roff, contributing editor at *U.S. News and World Report*, says that they are as ubiquitous as rush week and homecoming.[1]

During a typical Sex Week, in addition to the lectures about sexual violence and STDs, one can attend sex-toy workshops, drag shows, lectures from porn stars, sadomasochism seminars, sexy beach parties, X-rated film screenings, and even "condom fashion shows". Classy.

This *Animal House* version of higher education, in my opinion, surpasses the ridiculous. Of course, with the number of people having sex on university campuses, a little sex education is probably a good thing, but I'm not sure how stripper poles and bondage provide this. I agree with what Yale graduate Nathan Hardin says about these events: "The way I see it, a porn producer is about as qualified to lecture me on human sexuality as the CEO of McDonald's is to lecture me on healthy food choices."[2] Touché.

But I digress.

During Maryland's Sex Week I was scheduled to speak somewhere between "Deconstructing Gender in Families and Relationships" and "BDSM on a Budget". I was asked to speak about the negative effects of pornography. At the end of my talk, a young lady raised her hand and asked my opinion on the claim that porn can enhance romantic intimacy within a relationship.

I commonly get this question—and perhaps more commonly during a university-sponsored sex ed extravaganza. Recently I read a Dear Abby column that addresses this very issue with a married couple. The husband was pushing his wife to watch pornographic movies during sex. Jeanne Phillips, the advice columnist behind Dear Abby, said that couples can watch porn to spice up their sex lives, so long as both individuals are comfortable with it.[3]

Couples all over the world use porn in this way, and many feel that it kicks arousal into high gear. But the question remains: Should couples do this? I would like to answer this question by asking another one:

What is it about their relationship that couples think they are improving through their use of porn? Are they having more pleasurable sex? Perhaps. Do they feel more turned on? Maybe. But what if the mechanics of arousal and pleasure are not the essence of better sex? What if the big *O* of sex is not orgasm, but oneness? What if the best sex is about bonding and connecting to another person?

The fact is, many studies show that porn doesn't complement sexual intimacy with one's partner; it competes with it. If you become more and more dependent on images of other naked people in front of your face in order to be aroused, then you are castrating your brain. After all, that's what impotence really means: without your own power. If you find that you need those images or memories of those images to reach a climax, then you and your spouse aren't the ones with the power anymore. The image has power over you. As one wife told me: "When we watch porn in the bedroom, I don't get the feeling that he's really with me. I'm not his lover. He's just masturbating in my body."

People who watch porn have lower levels of sexual satisfaction with their partners. According to a study published in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, after only a few prolonged exposures to pornographic videos, men and women alike reported less sexual satisfaction with their intimate partners, including with their partners' affection, physical appearance, and sexual performance.[4]

People who watch porn also have lower levels of relational commitment and don't communicate as well with their partners. The *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* released the result of several studies about the impact of porn on relationships. In one experiment, half of a group gave up porn for three weeks, and the other half gave up their favorite food but were allowed to watch porn. Interestingly, those who quit porn showed increased commitment to their romantic relationship at the end of the three weeks.[5] According to another study published in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, compared with those who watch porn alone or even with their partners, those who don't view any porn at all have lower levels of negative communication in their relationship.[6]

Also, it shouldn't come as a surprise that people who watch porn are more likely to cheat on their partners. One study, for instance, found that regardless of how satisfied people are with their relationships, watching porn heightens their perception that the grass is greener somewhere else, and they are thus more likely to flirt with others and to cheat on a partner.[7] Another study found that the rate of infidelity among those who don't watch porn is half of the rate among those who had watched porn either alone or with their partners.[8]

Some men have thought—or even said to their partners—"At least I go to porn to get my needs met. I don't sleep around." This attitude is hardly commendable. These men are essentially saying, "If I didn't have the ability to get off to virtual women, who knows what I would do to real women?"

If we believe that one of the chief goals of sex is intimacy, why would anyone think watching strangers have sex is a way to achieve this goal?

THE STRUGGLE WITH PORN

22. We can't protect our kids from porn in today's world.

There is no question about whether our children will see porn. Their exposure to it is inevitable.

While making his documentary *Porn on the Brain*, Martin Daubney was invited to sit in on a class of teen boys and girls at a school in North England with a fantastic reputation. Jonny Hunt, a sex education consultant, stood before a class of uniformed students—wide-eyed, shy, with high-pitched voices, barely adolescents—and asked them to write a list of all the sexual terms they knew, no matter how extreme. When Hunt pinned their lists to the board, every adult in the room was startled about how much these students knew: their index of terms surpassed the knowledge even of the consultant.

After sitting in on several more classes like this one and interviewing some of the children, Daubney wrote, "It seemed as if the children's entire expectation of sex had been defined by what they see in online porn." Young girls spoke of how boys expect porn sex in real life. Boys spoke of how they even stumble across bestiality online. Daubney asked the teens, "On a scale of one to ten, how likely would you say it is that boys and girls your age are watching porn online?" The reply was a chorus of tens, nines, and one eight. All the students admitted that their parents had no idea what they were watching.[1]

Eric Spitznagel, writing for *Details* magazine, says, "By the time they're in high school, America's porn-fed youth have already amassed an encyclopedic knowledge of smut."[2] Spitznagel was not writing this out of concern for teens but was looking upon their experiences with a middle-aged jealousy. Gone are the days of prepubescent boys stumbling on a father's stash of magazines in the closet. Boys and girls now consume hard-core video material that is readily available to them.

CyberPsychology and Behavior released the results of a study showing that 93 percent of boys and 62 percent of girls in the United States see porn before the age of eighteen, and many of these exposures are not shut-the-laptop-and-walk-away glimpses but porn binges.[3] According to the 2010 Youth Internet Safety Survey, a quarter of U.S. teens are exposed to porn online when they aren't even looking for it.[4]

The majority of the pornography consumed is accessed on mobile devices.[5] An estimated 31 percent of teens own smartphones, and a smartphone without restrictions amounts to an X-rated theater in your pocket.[6]

Among youth, it is not a matter of merely consuming porn but of becoming porn. Kim Goldman, director of the Santa Clarita Valley Youth Project, says, "Of course girls want to emulate this stuff. Girls talk about feeling like they have to be like what they see on TV."[7] Conservative estimates say that about 20 percent of sixteen-year-olds and 30 percent of seventeen-year-olds have received a sext (a sexually explicit text message) on their cell phones.[8] Teens use apps such as Snapchat, Kik, WhatsApp, or iDelete to send nude images of themselves. Often teens will use Tumblr and Facebook to leak sexts of their ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends—a phenomenon called "revenge porn".

I heard Joanna Angel, owner of the porn company Burning Angel, say that she doesn't have to coach the young actors doing porn films for the first time. Having indulged in porn since youth, she said, boys and girls come to the porn set ready to perform. They enter their relationships ready to perform too. Pornography is powerful sex education. One study that surveyed teens suggests that the more often young people seek online porn, the more likely they are to have a "recreational" attitude about sex.[9] Among young men who watch porn, 53 percent say that porn has "inspired" them.[10]

In the face of such an overwhelming trend among youth, do parents have any hope of protecting their children?

First, as parents, we should not allow the trends to cloud our understanding of the role we play. We are not responsible in the short term for every child on the planet. We are responsible for our own children. All the grim statistics should not paralyze us into inactivity.

To help our children to grow up in a pornified world, we must take the double-pronged strategy of both protecting their minds and preparing their character.

Protecting Their Minds

Beginning when your children are very young, think holistically about media choices and access in your home. You must be shrewd about all the media your kids consume. Remember, pornography exists on a spectrum of media options. A report from the American Psychological Association states, "Virtually every media form studied provides ample evidence of the sexualization of women,

including television, music videos, music lyrics, movies, magazines, sports media, video games, the Internet, and advertising."[11]

You must be the media gatekeepers and never be passive when it comes to the media choices your children make. Watch TV and movies with your children. Know what magazines they are reading and what websites they visit. Be vocal about your values, and ask critical questions. "Is a woman's true value bound up in how she looks?" "Did you notice that this advertisement is drawing attention to her sex appeal?" Give your children the language to question the values that are being pushed through sexual images. If you don't like a certain TV show, movie, or piece of music, tell your children why and then be clear about your expectations.

Some kind of Internet filtering and monitoring is an absolute must. Make this your personal rule: if I am not willing to monitor it, I will not provide it or allow it. This rule should go for you as well: if you install monitoring or filtering software on computers, tablets, and phones that your children use, do the same for yourself—with modified settings so that you can get to the places online you need to go to. This models accountability for your kids.

For a while, I worked for a wonderful software company called Covenant Eyes, and I saw firsthand from the customers the value of raising kids with accountability. Especially when kids are young, strict filtering is a must, but as they get older, you should hold your kids accountable for where they go online as you loosen the filtering restrictions. Notice that the focus here should be on accountability, not on spying. Accountability means that your teens know that their online footprints are being tracked. You aren't trying to catch them red-handed. If kids grow up in a home where tracking isn't a punitive measure but simply part of the culture of the home, they are far more likely to embrace it.

Children should be prepared from a young age to deal with porn exposure. Even when all the protective measures are in place in your own home, your child is only as safe as the locker room at school—where kids are walking around with cell phones full of hard-core material. Train your child from a young age how to react when porn appears.

For young children, there's a fantastic read-aloud book called *Good Pictures Bad Pictures*. Author Kristen Jensen does a wonderful job of warning children about the existence of pornography without provoking needless curiosity. The book presents kids with a simple plan for how to react if they see pornography.

For all children and teens, there must be media limits in the home. Don't even make secrecy an option. Cell phones should be monitored and filtered and should stay out of bedrooms at night. (And if your teen says that he uses his phone as an alarm clock, remember that stores still sell alarm clocks and go buy

one.) Again, if these rules are established early, they will not be seen as disciplinary but as wise principles by which your family operates.

Preparing Their Character

Protective measures are important, but they are not the most important. In the end, we are raising future adults, not just kids. We are raising young men and women who will eventually leave home and enter a world without filters. It is vital that we prepare them by fortifying their character.

Sex Education

Teaching kids about sex might sound toe curling to some parents, but if we neglect to be involved in our children's sexual maturation, we will be leaving a massive void that promoters of pornography will be only too eager to fill.

Sex education, whether we like it or not, begins early. From a young age, children discover and explore their sexual identity and notice the basic physical differences in the opposite sex. Even when your children are young, you can communicate with them about the dignity and the value of their bodies. Teach your children the names of body parts and the importance of honoring their bodies and the bodies of others through modesty and privacy.

Age six in many countries marks a significant shift in a child's life as he begins to spend more time in school around peers, and it is in this setting that children are often exposed to misinformation about sex. Additionally, around the age of six or seven, children enter a new stage of cognitive development, when they begin to reason with logic and imagination. They become more aware of the world around them, and their intellectual curiosity begins to grow. Also around this age, a child's adrenal glands begin to mature, which leads to the production of natural sexual steroids in the body. Because of these factors, this is a perfect age for parents to begin having more formal conversations with their children about specific sexual topics, such as how life begins. It is also a time to give warnings about sexual predators.

During the middle childhood years, parents should teach children about the nature and the purpose of sex—most of all, its power and beauty. For some parents this might seem absurd. What young child can really understand these adult topics? The point of this education is not to overwhelm children with titillating information but to impress upon them the goodness of sex when it is

expressed with mutual love and affection in marriage.

During this time, make sure to draw a contrast between the goodness of marital love and the wrongness of exploiting another's body. You don't have to look far for examples. The checkout aisle at the grocery store will suffice—every magazine cover explodes with vibrant displays of scantily clad men and women. Simply tell your children, "Do you see the woman in this photo? Someone has paid her to show off her body to the world to attract people to buy this magazine, but we know that the human body is not meant to be turned into an object like this."

As kids get older, it is vital for parents to have conversations about body image and specific sexual behaviors. Parents must become unflinching realists and prepare themselves for candid conversations.

Once I gave a talk to a group of parents about sex education. While the overwhelming response to the talk was positive, some parents said they felt very uncomfortable with my using words such as "penis" and "vagina" in a public setting. I wanted to say, "No wonder you don't talk to your kids about sex. You can't even listen to anatomical words in room full of adults who have gathered to talk about sex." If this is you, I tell you with the utmost compassion: please overcome this inhibition. Children and teens need to see that their parents are reliable sources of knowledge about sex, which means that conversations about these matters should be considered normal in the home.

Please don't mistake my brevity on this subject for ignorance about the fear parents feel over this issue. I know parents often are afraid of saying too much too soon. Sadly, this often means that they end up saying too little too late.

Modeling Love

The sad reality is, children are sexualized because of adults. Adults are the ones who own multimillion-dollar advertising companies. Adults are the ones who buy and sell the bodies of others. Adults are the ones who produce and consume porn. Adults are the ones who expose children to porn, and sometimes these adults are the children's own parents.

If we are going to form the character of our children, we need to model the kind of person we wish them to become. This starts with the media we consume ourselves, but it extends beyond this to the way we relate to one another. We need to take an honest look at ourselves and ask: Do I show respect for myself and others by the way I dress, speak, and act? Do I honor and cherish my spouse? Am I careful to govern the things I look at and think about? Do I set

boundaries to protect my children?

Choose to be a family that upholds the dignity of every person. If you are a father, be the dad who noticeably turns his head or changes the channel when a racy image comes on TV. Show affection to your daughters and take an active role in protecting them by setting curfews, meeting their friends, and restricting their social life and social media when necessary. Talk frankly to your sons about sexual self-control. If you are a mother, be the mom who affirms her own inner beauty and doesn't obsess over her looks. Set the example of modesty for your daughters. If you are married, be the couple who goes on dates, communicates, and gives each other compliments. If you are a husband or a wife, be the spouse who steals kisses in the hallway: show your children what marital love and tenderness look like so that the allure of abusive porn sex can't hold a candle to what they've seen at home.

Setting Boundaries

A child who never suffers the consequences of his bad choices will soon learn that he can get away with anything. A child who never learns to respect authority will soon come to believe that all rules and guidelines are nothing but arbitrary standards that can be discarded for any momentary pleasure. Such a child is ripe for porn when he stumbles upon it. This is why children should grow up in homes where there are clear rules and expectations.

On this point we must be very careful. Too many parents have discarded the notion of rigid household rules because they associate this with authoritarianism. They know that kids living in authoritarian homes are quick to rebel because of power struggles, and they are correct.

Clinical psychologist Diana Baurmind's traditional classifications of parenting styles can be helpful as we consider how to lay ground rules in the home. There is a major difference between authoritative and authoritarian parenting.

- Authoritative parents use discipline to instill character in their children. Authoritarian parents use harsh chastisement to coerce and to control their children and, when that fails, to inflict pain on their children to get revenge.

- Authoritative parents accompany their discipline and instruction with high levels of warmth and grace. Authoritative parents are often cold and distant.

- Authoritative parents allow children to question the rules because they know

that dialogue is part of the learning process. Authoritarian parents are unresponsive to a child's needs and questions.

Because porn has no rules and feels like a no-risk venture, the child who believes there are no norms and expectations, or a child who believes he can easily ignore those expectations, will undoubtedly become ensnared in sexual media.

Parents should make expectations and standards clear in the home—not just about matters of sexuality and media choices, but about all matters that pertain to living wisely. Yes, children will push the limits, but an authoritative parent knows how to push back in a manner that communicates authority without sparking a huge power struggle. Authoritative parents invest time and attention in setting rules *with* their children, not just *for* their children, allowing them to see the wisdom of the rules that are set.

Nurture and Love

For many reasons, porn can become a refuge for people. In the world of fantasy, we get a quick fix of erotic pleasure, and in that fantasy world nothing is expected of us. Amid the pressures of life, a little porn can feel like well-deserved relief.

This is why, as parents, we need to do everything in our power to make sure that our homes are not places our kids seek refuge from. If anything, our homes should be places of refuge, but this cannot happen if our kids are growing up in an environment of constant criticism, impatience, self-centeredness, and frustration.

We must remember: there are two kinds of parental authority: institutional and personal. Institutional authority is the authority that parents have simply by virtue of being parents: children should honor their elders because they are their elders. Personal authority is the kind of authority that parents have by taking visible responsibility for their children, showing love, devotion, and affection, and giving children a sense of power in the choices they make. As parents do this, children yield to the wisdom their parents impart. Both kinds of authority are important for parents to use.

Institutional authority is like having your name on the checkbook; personal authority is like having money in the bank. Some parents make the mistake of thinking that if they deposit a lot of money in the account, they'll never have to write a check. They never put up any boundaries or make any rules. They have a

“just love ’em” attitude, which means they end up being pushovers. Other parents make the opposite mistake of believing that they can’t possibly be out of money because they still have checks in the checkbook. In other words, they demand obedience from their children “because I said so”, but their children are exasperated because their homes are devoid of the kind of encouragement that would help them to flourish.

There are no guarantees when it comes to parenting because no parent can control every aspect of a child’s world. But so far as it depends on us as parents, we must step up to the plate and raise the kind of children who are ready to respond to a sexualized world. We must guard their eyes and fortify their hearts. We must teach them the goodness and the purpose of sex, show them the beauty of sexual integrity and marital love, give them firm boundaries, and nurture them with affection and attention.

This isn’t just porn-proof parenting. It is wise parenting.

23. I will never be able to regain my spouse's trust after sneaking around with porn.

When you stood before your family, slipped that ring on your spouse's finger, and told her you would "forsake all others", I doubt there was some small print written somewhere that read: "Except when I want to sneak off to masturbate before digital prostitutes."

Deep down, despite all the excuses, this is not the kind of husband or wife any of us wants to be. Do you want to be the kind of person who loves someone for the rest of your life, gladly sacrificing yourself for the good of that person—experiencing an intimate personal and sexual bond? Or do you want to be the person who sneaks off late at night to have an intimate encounter with your computer? Which one of these sounds closer to the wedding vows you spoke and the person you wish to become?

Still, when a spouse discovers that her husband or his wife has been sneaking around watching porn, it can feel absolutely devastating. It is a traumatic discovery in the truest sense of the word. When dealing with a husband's sexual betrayal, approximately 70 percent of wives fit the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder, often manifesting symptoms of fear, depression, anxiety, obsessive thinking, insomnia, hypervigilance, and nightmares.[1]

Spouses in this situation often begin to doubt themselves, caught in the immense insecurity of feeling the need to compete with a world of fantasy. Not surprisingly, these spouses often feel angry, lonely, exhausted, and in deep despair. Is it possible to regain the trust of a spouse who feels so hurt?

In his book *Partners: Healing from His Addiction*, Dr. Doug Weiss uses a key phrase over and over: believe behavior. If you want your spouse to begin trusting you again, you must demonstrate trustworthy behaviors. Talk is cheap, and in the case of a partner who has been sneaking around watching porn for a long time, talk is even cheaper. Making promises or stating mere words of reassurance cannot rebuild trust. New behavior can.

I want to outline seven vital steps for rebuilding trust. For the sake of simplicity, I'll assume that the offending party is a husband who is attempting to regain his wife's trust, but the same steps equally apply to a woman attempting to regain her husband's trust.

1. Fully acknowledge the wrong.

It is vital for your wife to hear from you a clear, humble, honest admission of wrong. Don't just acknowledge the action: "I have been looking at pornography." Acknowledge the nature of the action: "I have wronged you by my selfishness, lust, and deception."

Also acknowledge that you don't fully understand just how badly you've hurt your wife and that you agree that her mistrust of you is warranted: "I know I have crippled your trust in me, and I don't blame you. Still, I won't pretend to understand how difficult this is for you, but I want to understand it better." Promise to listen to her—uninterrupted and without being defensive—then follow through with that promise, no matter how painful it is to hear her words.

2. Never shift the blame.

Acknowledge that, although there may be underlying reasons why you have been obsessed with porn, you take full responsibility for your actions. Perhaps you were exposed to porn at a young age, or perhaps you think your parents could have given you a much better sex education. Perhaps you feel as if your habit has spiraled out of control into an addiction and you need professional help. These are fine things to share with your wife, but don't ever treat them as excuses. Your wife needs to hear you take full ownership of the problem.

It is also common for a woman to feel as if the problem is at least partially hers. If she had only been sexier or less of a nag, maybe you wouldn't have gone down this path of fantasy and deception. You must remind your wife that this is a lie.

Tell her that porn is cleverly edited, high-octane sex, and no woman can (or should) compete with this. Women everywhere are told that they need to be younger, prettier, and bustier. The last person a woman should hear this message from is her husband. In the arms of her husband, she should feel beautiful—because she is.

3. Purge all access points to porn.

Do everything in your power to close off access to porn. Just as important, let your wife know what you are doing to close access.

Many husbands are tempted, especially after a while, to feel as if all the safeguards are a bit childish and over the top. Don't think this way. It probably

took you years to build up your porn habit. Don't be a fool and think it will go away in days or weeks. It takes a mature man to acknowledge where he is weak.

By closing off all the access points (and potential access points), you will show your wife exactly what she needs to see: that you love her more than your iPhone, more than unmonitored time online, more than your route to work that passes the adult bookstore, more than your private e-mail account, more than your secluded life, where no one knows the real you or the real temptations you face.

4. Encourage your wife to seek advice and help.

Though you are the one with the problem, your problem has spilled over into your wife's life. Encourage her to talk to someone else about her feelings of hurt, betrayal, and confusion. Resist the urge you might feel to save your precious reputation by telling her to keep your porn problem a total secret. This only discourages your wife from getting outside help.

Often those hurt by their spouse's porn use don't want or feel that they need any help, but since your problem caused your wife great trauma, let her know that no one should have to face that kind of trauma alone. Encourage her to speak to a good friend or a counselor. There are counselors trained to help spouses of sex and porn addicts (called APSATS, the Association of Partners of Sex Addicts Trauma Specialists).

5. Be incredibly patient with her.

If you've been secretly hooked on porn for a long time, when the secret finally comes out, it can feel paradoxically frightening and relieving all at the same time. For you, the secrecy or the resistance to change has been an enormous burden, but now things look brighter and more hopeful—nowhere to go but up.

This is often not how the offended spouses feel. The revelation of your secret or the burden of carrying your secret has been crushing. Trust has been shattered. The world as your wife knows it now seems unreal to her. She might be questioning everything she ever believed about her marriage and about you.

Be patient. Don't expect her to "be over this" because the secret is out or because you have made vows to change.

And don't push sexual intimacy with your wife soon after divulging your secret either. Spouses vary in their responses when it comes to discovering that

their husbands have a porn problem. Your wife may find the idea of sex with you repulsive, wondering whether you are just using her as a warm body as you replay pornographic scenes in your mind. Or she might be the opposite: sex might help to reassure her that things are still okay. Either response is very natural.

Whatever her reaction, you should pursue romance with your wife in nonsexual ways. Porn unfortunately trains us to desire sex without emotional engagement, to approach sex with a consumer mentality. To counteract this, you should pursue emotional engagement with your wife and let sex be the overflow. Show nonsexual physical affection—cuddle, hug, kiss. Be vulnerable: have heart-to-heart conversations about your memories, dreams, and hopes. Spend quality time together. Find ways to serve her. Surprise her with romantic gestures.

6. Become accountable for your technology use.

Most people who have a dysfunctional relationship with porn also have a dysfunctional relationship with technology. You might have the mentality: "What I do online is my own business, no one else's. It is my time." This has enabled you to create a private world of fantasy.

This mentality needs to change. One of the best ways to do this—it has helped me and countless others—is to use accountability software. Unlike filtering software that is typically used for kids and blocks adult websites, accountability software doesn't block anything. It lets you go wherever you want. But every week or so, an Internet report is e-mailed to someone of your choosing (such as a friend, mentor, spouse, or counselor).

This reporting has great benefits. For one, just the knowledge that someone will likely see a record of all the questionable places you've been online is enough to nip temptation in the bud for a lot of guys. Second, if you do slip up and watch porn, you've already made your confession to others: they already know the dirty details, so there's no option to hide or to minimize things. This keeps you honest. Third, it really shows the people who love you how serious you are about changing. It tells them, "My life is open to you. I don't want any more secrets."

Although there are a few accountability-oriented programs out there, the only one really worth its salt is Covenant Eyes. After testing some of these programs, I found that this is the one that consistently works the best.

7. Seek man-to-man accountability.

The word “accountability” might leave a bad taste in your mouth. That’s okay; it used to leave a bad taste in mine as well.

The best definition of accountability I can give you is this: giving permission to someone you trust to remind you of the person you really want to be. Yes, accountability involves sharing your faults and struggles with someone, but admitting those struggles aloud should always be followed by a reminder of what you are fighting for and the kind of man you hope to become. Having this mentality in mind will keep accountability from degenerating into demoralizing condemnation or a surface relationship in which you put on a smile and say everything is just fine.

Ideally, good accountability friendships should be man-to-man (or woman-to-woman, as the case may be). Someone of the same sex is more likely to be able to see through your pretenses and help you to get to the bottom of things.

Should your wife be your accountability partner? In one sense, yes. In another sense, no.

It is easy for men who have had a secret porn life to develop a secret “recovery life”. Don’t do this. Don’t cut your wife out of the process. Yes, some things are best kept secret if you are in a professional recovery program. If you are in a support group, keep the identity of other members a secret (they don’t call those groups “Anonymous” for no reason). Also, don’t feel pressured to give a play-by-play of every detail you’ve confessed or said aloud to a counselor, a support group, or a minister. You can share these things if you want, but those settings are safe places for you to vent your sloppy, uncensored, and often confused thoughts, and they should be kept safe for you.

Still, as you make your plan for becoming a new man, make sure your wife knows the important details. If she is ever to trust you again, she needs to know what you intend to do and needs to see you doing it. Tell her what your porn “triggers” (tempting scenarios) have been in the past and how you plan to deal with them in the future. Tell her about the books you are reading. Tell her about the advice your minister, mentor, or counselor is giving you and how you are following that advice. Tell her who is holding you accountable. Liberally share the details of your plan for recovery so that she can see you living out the plan.

All the same, while your wife needs to know the details of your recovery, don’t make her your confessor—your sole confidant as you are taking steps to quit. Lean on others to do the heavy lifting of bearing your burdens, confessions, and difficult questions. Your wife should see you pursuing these kinds of friendships with men who can lend you solid personal and practical advice.

The healing of your marriage is possible. I know because I've seen many couples recover from the damage caused by porn. Pornography addiction thrives in the darkness of secrecy; it cannot survive in the light of accountability.

24. I will always be addicted to porn.

Not long ago *Vanity Fair* ran a cover story in which actress Jennifer Lawrence talked about the nude photos she sent to her boyfriend—which were then hacked and leaked to the public. In her interview she defended her original nude selfie by saying, "I was in a loving, healthy, great relationship for four years. It was long distance, and either your boyfriend is going to look at porn or he's going to look at you."[1]

This is a sad statement from a woman who has seemingly given in to the notion—the rather sexist notion—that men are interested in only one thing and incapable of self-control. In the face of raging hormones and the ubiquity of porn, her statement implies, men will inevitably consume porn, and women must become porn themselves to compete. This is the lie that so many men and women believe.

The more we learn about both the pervasiveness of pornography in our culture and the impact it can have on the mind, the more we're tempted to think that perhaps we're bound to it.

The fact is, many people are realizing the wonderful truth that life without porn is not only possible but also much more interesting. Those entrenched in porn tend to live suffocatingly small lives, constantly looking for their next fix. Those who begin to find freedom begin inhabiting a larger, more colorful existence.

Studies are showing that the brain can actually heal itself, even after years of consuming pornography. As previous chapters of this book have communicated, porn can and does hijack the neurocircuits of the brain, but with time and effort, the brain can be given space to heal itself. For some this can be a long road. Therapists Wendy and Larry Maltz in their book, *The Porn Trap*, state:

> Porn's power to produce experiences of excitement, relaxation, and escape from pain make it highly addictive. Over time you can come to depend on it to feel good and require it so you don't feel bad. Cravings, preoccupations, and out-of-control behavior with using it can become commonplace. Porn sex can become your greatest need. If you have been using porn regularly to "get high," withdrawal from porn can be as filled with agitation, depression, and sleeplessness as detoxing from alcohol, cocaine, and other hard drugs. In fact, people in porn recovery take an average of eighteen months to heal from the damage to their dopamine receptors alone.

Practically speaking, although you may feel pornography is simply an

undefeatable foe impossible to overcome, the fact is otherwise. If you want freedom, you must fight resolutely, implementing tactics that will enable you to have the time and the space for your brain to heal. You didn't get hooked on porn overnight; the craving for it won't go away overnight either.

Understand What You're Fighting (and Not Fighting)

A few years back, when my wife was pregnant with our third child, I found the book *What to Expect When You're Expecting* on the coffee table. I thought it would be fun to peruse the section about the weird cravings pregnant women have—you know, pickles mixed with ice cream and that sort of thing. But there were also some cravings listed that I didn't expect, such as a hunger for clay, rocks, ashes, hair, and laundry starch. This is a condition called pica, and some speculate that it is due to a nutritional deficiency, particularly of iron.

Suppose I came home from work one day to find my wife sucking on a piece of charcoal—weird thought experiment, I know, but stay with me. There are two unhelpful reactions I could have. I could react in horror, shaming her for her choice in cuisine. "You are disgusting! That's filthy! What were you thinking?" Or I might go to the opposite extreme, thinking, "Better not say anything. If she wants to suck on charcoal in the privacy of her own home, who am I to stop her?" As sensitive as it might sound, this is an uninformed response. Depending on what someone is consuming, pica can cause serious medical problems.

The loving thing to do might be to say, "Honey, just put the charcoal down. That's it. . . nice and easy. Let's go to the kitchen. I've got a nice big steak that I'll bet you'll love."

What does any of this have to do with porn? Well, just as pica is a distortion in our desire for food, pornography use is a distortion in our desire for sex. Condemning pica as an unhealthy condition doesn't mean I hate food. Similarly, condemning porn as unhealthy sex doesn't mean I hate sex. A desire to eat is a sign of health. A desire to eat nonnutritive substances such as wood, dirt, or glass is not. A desire for sex is a sign of health. A desire for porn is not.

One of the reasons many people find it difficult to break free from porn and remain free is that they confuse sexual desire with a craving for pornography. Whatever protocols you put in place to distance yourself from pornography, remember: the goal is not the long-term squelching of sexual desire. The goal is the healing of your sexual cravings so that you pursue them in a manner that pushes you toward a healthy and satisfying marital relationship.

Making a U-Turn on the Porn Superhighway

In his terrific little book, *Treating Pornography Addiction*, Dr. Kevin Skinner outlines what he calls the "activation sequence". By this he means the sequence of events that lead up to looking at pornography. He outlines six steps in the sequence—the seventh being actually looking at pornography. We might think of this sequence as a highway: knowing these six mile markers along the pornography highway will not only help us to recognize them when they occur but will also help us to make a U-turn to escape the habit.

1. Trigger or Stimulus

A trigger or stimulus is something that causes something else. When we speak of triggers in connection with pornography or masturbation, we mean those things that initiate the activation sequence. Understanding our triggers will help us immensely in the fight against the temptation and can even stop the temptation to look at porn altogether.

There are obvious triggers, and there are not-so-obvious triggers. Obvious triggers include things such as getting a Victoria's Secret catalogue in the mail, listening to music with raunchy lyrics, seeing pop-up ads, and so forth. Less obvious triggers include things such as experiencing a frustrating or overwhelming situation, hearing someone make an emasculating or bitter comment about us, or being rejected by somebody.

In his book, Dr. Skinner speaks of a client who, when he was a boy, would hear the sounds of his father beating his mother. To make sure the boy never got into the middle of the abuse, his mother would give her son her husband's *Playboy* magazines. She would throw them in his room and say, "Stay here and don't come out." This is how this young man learned to cope with high-stress situations. Is it any wonder that today, as a thirty-something-year-old, when he gets stressed out, his body and brain know exactly where to go to feel better?

Anyone who wants to make a U-turn at his triggers first needs to know what his triggers are. What sights, sounds, or events tend to get the motor going? When one becomes aware of his triggers, this will allow him to be more vigilant.

At this step of the activation sequence—actually, at every step—if one wants to make a U-turn, he needs to turn on his "thinking brain", the part of the brain called the prefrontal cortex (which I've written about in previous chapters of this book). This is the part of the brain that deliberates, that chooses between wise and unwise actions. One can turn on his prefrontal cortex in several ways, but

one of the easiest is to speak aloud and label what is happening: “This is a trigger.” By doing this, a person stops being a passive participant, stops letting his habits stay in the driver seat, and helps himself to snap out of it.

2. Emotional Response

After the initial trigger comes an emotional response to that trigger. It could be a sense of excitement or curiosity or anticipation. The emotion might be something very acute—a sudden feeling or sensation—or it might be something that builds slowly over time.

3. The First Thought

This comes almost simultaneously with the emotion. It might be “I want to watch some porn right now” or “No one has to know” or “What will I see if I look up _____?”

When the initial emotion and the first thought spring to mind, if one wants to make a U-turn at these steps, again, the thinking brain must be activated. One must speak aloud the truth about the matter: “I feel frustrated, and my habit now is to rush to porn because it feels comforting” or whatever the scenario happens to be.

4. The Chemical Release

If one keeps moving down this highway, the body will begin gearing up for watching pornography because this is what the body has been trained to do. The body will get ready for climax, and the brain will release chemicals associated with memory, telling itself, “Remember where you got your fix the last hundred times? That’s where we need to go next.” Even before pornography is consumed, the body is already anticipating the event.

5. Body Language

Once the chemicals are released into the system, the body begins to change. Heart rate increases, palms become sweaty or cold, eyes dilate, there is a tingling in the groin or the feeling of butterflies in the stomach, or the muscles tense up.

If one has been mindlessly driving down the porn highway up to this point, these physical sensations should serve as a big caution sign. The “gotta have it” feeling should alert someone that it is time to make an immediate U-turn. Once again, he should activate the thinking brain: speak aloud the truth of what is happening. “My body is gearing up to look at porn because of a chemical release. I need to make an immediate decision to do something different.”

6. The Battle

At this point, the decision to look at porn or not still needs to be made, and a battle will ensue. Dr. Skinner calls this the “second thought”. Pro-versus-con judgments will bounce through the mind like a lightning-speed game of Ping-Pong. This is the brain’s backup system trying to throw on the brakes and decide what it really wants to do.

The mind might think, “No one has to know”, “This is the last time, then I’m done”, “I’m free to do what I want”, or “I’m eventually going to give in to this, so I might as well get it over with.” There might be opposing thoughts such as “What if my girlfriend finds out?”, “My family would be so disappointed”, “There are better things to do”, or “I hate the power this has over me.”

Whatever thoughts win this battle will determine the behavior.

7. The Behavior

Assuming nothing has interrupted this activation sequence, the behavior is consuming porn.

Two Key Strategies

When it comes to making U-turns on this porn highway, there are two key strategies to employ. The first is for when you find yourself on the highway already, and the second is for changing your habits to avoid getting on the highway in the first place.

Strategy 1: The Thinking Brain

I’ve already mentioned the importance of activating the thinking brain: speaking

aloud to yourself key truths, no matter where in the activation sequence you happen to be. One reason this strategy is so powerful is that you use verbal cues to wake up to reality and think about what you're doing. But this strategy will be more powerful if you do your homework and prepare for those moments, rather than assuming you will know how to think on your feet in the heat of the moment.

Having spoken to countless people who have broken away from the grip of porn addiction, I offer here some of the best experience-tested ideas I've heard.

1. Educate yourself. Learn as much as you can about the impact porn has on your life: all the things porn is robbing from your life, the way it negatively impacts your brain, your body, and your relationships—even your most cherished relationships. The more you fill your mind with this information, the more likely this information will come to mind to interrupt the activation sequence.

2. Write down your negative and positive motivations. What do you lose by constantly pursuing pornography all the time? What is it costing you? What could it cost you? What is it costing society? These are negative motivations. What do you stand to gain by becoming a porn-free person? How will your life improve? What kind of man or woman do you hope to become? These are positive motivations. Keep a shorthand top-ten list of these motivations on you at all times—in your wallet or in your purse—and pull it out when you find yourself in an activation sequence.

3. Write down your exit strategies. It is one thing to take your thoughts captive. It is another to know what to do next. Before another activation sequence begins, write down what you plan to do. Think action verbs here. Get up. Walk. Run. Call someone. Write a letter. Go outside. Write down your plan for predictable moments of temptation.

4. Finish the fantasy. This might sound counterintuitive, but it is so practical. When something triggers an initial thought, our mind gets stuck in a rut of anticipation. Thoughts are focused on what is coming or what we could be doing. Instead of staying in that rut, finish the fantasy: picture yourself following through with the action—walking to your computer, binging on porn for a few hours, masturbating, and then feeling like a miserable failure as a result. When we do this, it pushes us past the feeling of anticipation and the rush of excitement to the reality. We'll then be in a better state of

mind to think, “This is not the kind of person I want to be.”

5. Think about sex. Australian author Frank Sheed wrote that modern man practically never thinks about sex. He might dream about it, joke about it, write songs about it—but he doesn’t think about it. What is the nature of sex? What is its purpose? Is it merely to “get off”, or does our biology reveal a more meaningful purpose? As we look at the way the human brain is wired and the way our sexual organs are designed, we discover that sex is about both openness to new life and bonding to another person in love. It is a breathtakingly more exciting picture of sex than what *Playboy*, *Cosmo*, or *Fifty Shades of Stupid* paints for us. These are the thoughts we can use when the activation sequence is underway. We can think, “This is not what my sexuality is for, just objectifying self-pleasure. My sexuality is for the creation of life and the creation of love.”

Strategy 2: Change Your Habits

Ideally the best way to escape the porn superhighway is never to get on it in the first place. This means avoiding as many triggers as possible.

Now, it is important to note that no one can actually avoid every potential trigger. One of your triggers might be frustration, and you are certain to enter potentially frustrating situations. If seeing a racy ad on TV or in a magazine is one of your triggers, unless you plan to live in a cave somewhere, you will likely run into sexualized media on occasion.

Still, there are many triggers you can avoid. Is one of your triggers being alone on your phone with the bedroom door closed? Change something about that habit. Resolve not to shut your door, or never to bring your laptop into your bedroom, or get accountability software such as Covenant Eyes on your computer and have a good friend start receiving regular e-mailed reports of your Internet activity. In other words, get rid of the option of anonymity and secrecy.

Is one of your triggers a certain kind of music? Stop listening to it. Is one of your triggers a certain channel on TV? Get rid of your cable subscription. Do you have porn stored somewhere in your home? Throw it out. Do you have unlimited access to the Internet through your phone? Put some kind of filtering or accountability program in place. Do you pass an “adult” store on the way home from work? Go a different way.

All of this might seem over the top, but if porn were easy to quit, you probably wouldn’t be reading this chapter right now. A lot of people try to quit

without closing all the access points to porn. To quote Dr. Phil, “How’s that working for you?”

Remember this mantra: “When you’re at your best, plan for your worst.” Right now, if you have a resolve to avoid porn, remember: a day will likely come when you won’t have that resolve, so make sure you have protections in place.

If you understand the activation sequence, try to prevent triggers, and then activate your thinking brain when the triggers come, you can be successful.

Lastly, when you are making your plans to quit pornography, it is important to set small, measurable goals. Don’t make promises like “I’ll never watch porn again.” Freedom is one day at a time. If you view freedom from porn as a destination, you’ll almost certainly remain disappointed. This is because freedom is not so much a destination we reach as much as it is a daily decision we make. Your goal today is not “I’ll never look at porn again.” Instead it’s “Today I resolve to be the person I want to be, and one thing that means is this: today I will not get sucked into pornography.” Real freedom is a lifetime of todays, a lifetime of moment-by-moment choices. Don’t worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Freedom Is Possible

French novelist Virginie Despentes has reportedly said that consuming pornography does not lead to more sex; it leads to more porn. Much like eating McDonald’s everyday will accustom you to food that (although enjoyable) is essentially not food, pornography conditions the consumer to being satisfied with an impression of extreme sex rather than the real.

Porn promises freedom, but it enslaves us. It promises excitement, but it ends up boring us. It promises us “adult” entertainment, yet it makes us increasingly juvenile. It promises intimacy, but leads to isolation.

The good news is that freedom is possible and something so much better awaits us on the other side.

APPENDIX 1

Quick Findings from the Experts

I hope that in addition to helping you to understand more about the destructive nature of porn on individuals, relationships, and society, this book will help you to explain these things to others. To that end, in addition to the many research findings already discussed, in this appendix I have provided findings concerning porn's effects on (1) the brain, (2) emotional health, (3) sexual tastes, (4) sexual violence, (5) erectile dysfunction, (6) marriage, and (7) adolescence.

Porn and the Brain

1. When researchers compared brain scans of porn users with scans of nonusers, they found that the more porn the person had used, the less his reward center activated when porn images were flashed on a screen.[1] The researchers said, "This is in line with the hypothesis that intense exposure of pornographic stimuli results in a downregulation of the natural neural response to sexual stimuli."[2]

2. With a dulled reward center, a person can't feel dopamine's effects as well as they used to. As a result, the porn a person is using can stop producing the same excitement it did before. This leads many users to go in search of more hardcore material to get a bigger dopamine burst.[3]

3. People with Internet addiction have been found to have less gray matter in several important areas of the brain, including the frontal lobes (which oversee things such as planning, prioritizing, and controlling impulses), the striatum (which is involved with the reward center and with self-control), and the insula (an area involved with feeling empathy and compassion for others). The vast majority of people with porn addictions have Internet addictions.[4]

4. One study showed that even moderate porn use correlated with having

reduced gray matter. Though it did not conclusively show that porn had caused the reduction, the study led researchers to conclude that porn use was the most likely explanation. They even subtitled their study "The Brain on Porn". The study also found a correction between the length of time spent watching porn and the amount of gray matter reduction in the brain's reward circuitry, which is important in motivation and decision-making. This reduction is also indicative of having a numbed pleasure response. The researchers interpreted the reduction as an effect of porn use.[5]

5. Addiction researchers have found that brain problems seen in Internet addicts, similar to the problems seen among porn users, improved with abstinence and treatment, indicating that the addiction was the problem, not a preexisting condition.[6]

6. Almost every study on addiction has demonstrated atrophy of multiple areas of the brain, particularly those associated with frontal volitional control and reward salience centers. This is true for addictions to drugs such as cocaine,[7] methamphetamine,[8] and opioids,[9] and also for behavioral conditions associated with pathologic overconsumption of food,[10] sex,[11] and the Internet.[12]

7. The journal *NeuroImage* published a study in 2008 demonstrating that as men are sexually aroused by pornography, the mirror neurons in the brain also fire. This means that the brain naturally imagines the porn viewer in the scene. The man is not merely responding to the naked woman. His brain is mirroring the pornographic scene with the viewer as the main character, heightening arousal.[13]

8. When a person continually strengthens the brain maps linking sexual excitement to porn, those maps enlarge and can crowd out maps linking sexual excitement to a real person or to real sex.[14]

9. In 2005, Dr. Eric Nestler wrote a landmark paper describing addiction as a dysfunction of the reward centers of the brain. Addiction occurs, he explained, when pleasure-reward pathways are hijacked by certain euphoria-inducing activities, such as eating, taking drugs, or having sex.[15]

Porn and Emotional Health

1. Studies have found that frequency of porn use correlates with depression, anxiety, stress, and social problems.[16] It shouldn't be surprising that porn use is associated with depression, given that porn has the ability to mess with the user's dopamine system.[17] Research has found that dopamine signaling is a main factor in depression.[18]

2. Dopamine significantly affects our motivation to pursue goals and build relationships, so when the brain can't feel dopamine's effects as well, our interest in doing those things can start to slide.[19]

3. Studies have found that porn use is correlated with having less sexual and relationship satisfaction and changed sexual tastes.[20]

4. Studies have found that porn use is correlated with lowered quality of life and poorer health.[21]

5. Studies have found that porn use is correlated with intimacy problems.[22]

6. Researchers at Oxford University found that moderate to severe Internet addiction is associated with increased risk of harming oneself.[23]

7. Even moderate porn use is correlated with damage to parts of the brain involved with motivation and decision-making.[24]

8. Researchers have also found that moderate porn use is correlated with shrunken gray matter in parts of the brain that oversee cognitive function.[25]

9. A study that looked at Internet addicts (pornography was a main online activity for the subjects) found that they suffered from "negative moods" when they went offline.[26]

10. Researchers in Belgium looked at fourteen-year-old boys' academic performance twice and compared the two scores. They found that "an increased use of Internet pornography decreased boys' academic performance six months later."[27]

Porn and Sexual Tastes

1. Studies have found that porn use is correlated with less sexual and relationship satisfaction and changed sexual tastes.[28]

2. Sexual interests are conditionable—we can train them, as Pavlov trained a dog to salivate when it heard a bell.[29]

3. The brain's reward center doesn't know the difference between "porn that's 'acceptable' to use" and "porn that's not cool". All it knows is that it likes dopamine. So, when something sick or disturbing pops up and is linked with sexual arousal, the brain stores the connection.[30] "Neurons that fire together wire together, and feeling pleasure in the presence of [something normally unappealing] causes it to get wired into the brain as a source of delight."[31]

4. As a porn user builds up tolerance "the pleasure of sexual discharge must be supplemented with the pleasure of an aggressive release, and sexual and aggressive images are increasingly mingled—hence the increase in sadomasochistic themes in hardcore porn."[32]

5. Researchers have found that women become less sexually aroused by repeated viewing of the same porn, but become aroused again when novel porn is introduced.[33]

6. In a 2012 NoFap poll of users, more than half of the respondents agreed with the statement "My tastes became increasingly 'extreme' or 'deviant'."[34]

7. In a study, researchers found that when male subjects saw the same porn film repeatedly, they were progressively less aroused by it. When researchers introduced a new video after eighteen viewings of the old one, subjects' arousal spiked.[35]

8. When a person uses porn, his brain wires together what is seen with the feelings of arousal it creates, building new brain maps for both what he thinks is sexy and what he expects from his partner.[36]

9. Researchers have found that the younger the age of first porn use, the more likely a porn consumer is to use bestiality or child porn.[37]

Porn and Sexual Violence

1. In a meta-analysis of forty-six studies published from 1962 to 1995, comprising a total sample of 12,323 people, researchers concluded that pornographic material puts one at increased risk of the following:

   • developing sexually deviant tendencies (31 percent increase in risk)

   • committing sexual offenses (22 percent increase in risk)

   • accepting rape myths (31 percent increase in risk)[38]

2. A study that both exposed participants to pornography and asked them about their pornography use found that high pornography use corresponds to higher acceptance of rape myth, acceptance of violence against women, adversarial sex beliefs, likelihood of committing rape and forced sex acts, and sexual callousness.[39]
   High-use viewers who were exposed to nonviolent, dehumanizing pornography had higher scores in reported likelihood of committing rape, sexual callousness, and sexually aggressive behaviors than high-use viewers who weren't shown pornography as part of the study.

3. "A man may learn that there isn't any need to pay attention to a woman who is resisting, crying, screaming, struggling, or saying no, because ultimately she wants it and will enjoy it. He can conclude that her resistance is a sham and is part of a sex dance that leads to orgasm. He may assume that even her resistance is sexy and sexually arousing because it is part of the sexual template."[40]

4. "While every type of pornography (including softcore, hardcore, violent, and rape) is correlated with using verbal coercion, drugs, and alcohol to coerce women into sexual activity,[41] the increase in attitudes supportive of sexual violence is greater following exposure to violent porn than it is following exposure to nonviolent porn."[42]

5. A study that examined sexual violence found that all pornography types (softcore, hardcore, violent, and rape) are correlated with using verbal coercion, drugs, and alcohol to coerce women sexually. All pornography types, including softcore, are correlated with the future likelihood of raping

a woman. All pornography other than softcore are correlated with actual rape. Those who had higher past exposure to violent pornography were six times more likely to report having raped someone compared with those who reported low past exposure to pornography.[43]

6. The correlations between circulation rates for *Play* boy, *Penthouse, Chic, Club, Forum, Gallery, Genesis,* and *Oui* and rape rates show that states with higher rates of circulation had higher rates of rape.[44]

7. "A survey of 313 college students indicated that exposure to men's magazines was significantly associated with lower intentions to seek sexual consent and lower intentions to adhere to decisions about sexual consent."[45]

8. Researchers have found that the more frequently men used pornography and the more violent it was, the more likely they were to coerce others into sex, including using physical force (rape).[46]

9. According to a study of domestic violence victims, battery cases include sexual violence when pornography is involved. "The batterer's use of pornography and alcohol significantly increases a battered woman's odds of being sexually abused. Pornography alone increases the odds of sexual violence by a factor of almost two." Forty percent of abused women indicated that their partner used violent pornography. Of those whose partners used pornography, 53 percent said that they had been asked or forced to enact scenes they had been shown, and 26 percent had been reminded of pornography by an abuser during the abuse. Of the 40 percent who had been raped, 73 percent said that their partners had used pornography.[47]

10. Pornography has been shown to have a role in rape cases. In one study, in 193 cases of rape, 24 percent of the rapists mentioned allusions to pornographic material. This is even more significant because these comments were made by respondents without any solicitation or reference to the issue of pornography by the interviewer. The comments followed the same pattern: the assailant referred to pornographic materials he had seen or read and then insisted that the victims not only enjoyed rape but also extreme violence.[48]

Porn and Erectile Dysfunction

1. “It’s hard to know exactly how many young men are suffering from porn-induced ED. But it’s clear that this is a new phenomenon, and it’s not rare.”[49]

2. “I can tell how much porn a man watches as soon as he starts talking candidly about any sexual dysfunction he has. . . . A man who masturbates frequently can soon develop erection problems when he’s with his partner. Add porn to the mix, and he can become unable to have sex. . . . A penis that has grown accustomed to a particular kind of sensation leading to rapid ejaculation will not work the same way when it’s aroused differently. Orgasm is delayed or doesn’t happen at all.”[50]

3. “It starts with lower reactions to porn sites. Then there is a general drop in libido, and in the end it becomes impossible to get an erection.”[51]

4. In Italy, research that looked at porn and its impact on sexual problems in men ages 19 to 25 found that on a scale ranking sexual desire from 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), porn users averaged a score of 4.21, while nonusers came in at 8.02. Erectile function was also 30 percent lower among porn users compared with nonusers, and those on porn also earned lower scores on overall sexual satisfaction and orgasm function.[52]

5. A study done at Cambridge University that looked at men with porn addiction found that more than half of the subjects reported that “as a result of excessive use of sexually explicit materials, they had. . . experienced diminished libido or erectile function specifically in physical relationships with women (although not in relationship to the sexually explicit material).”[53]

6. “Pills [such as Viagra] will do something physiologic. They can provide blood flow to the genitalia. But what they can’t do is stimulate the most sexual organ, which is the brain. So when the brain is desensitized, you create a mismatch. And some men will even say, ‘Well I do get an erection’ even in these men who are able to be treated. Even with that erection, they do feel desensitized. They don’t get pleasure. So it doesn’t treat the pleasure component, and they feel that maybe I’m watching someone else having sex or it’s not even my penis; I feel dissociated from the experience. And when they have that they have this brain-penis mismatch created where the brain is simply not feeling pleasure even if they may or may not achieve an

erection."[54]

7. Researchers have found that even moderate porn use was correlated with having a lowered response to sexual cues in the brain. Although the research didn't conclusively show that porn had caused the changes, that was the theory the researchers found most likely. They even subtitled their study "The Brain on Porn".[55]

8. When a person is continuously strengthening the brain maps linking sexual excitement to porn, those maps enlarge and can crowd out maps linking sexual excitement to a real person or to real sex.[56]

9. Researchers in Italy took brain scans of men with ED for which there was no obvious physical cause. They found that their brains showed reduced gray matter in the reward center (which means reduced dopamine signaling) and the sexual centers of the hypothalamus.[57] Porn is associated with having reduced gray matter.[58]

10. Doctors and past porn users have found that leaving porn behind can fix erectile-dysfunction problems.[59]

Porn and Marriage

1. Frequent exposure to porn is associated with diminished trust in intimate partners; increased risk of developing a negative body image, especially for women; acceptance of promiscuity as a normal state of interaction; beginning to view love in a cynical manner; belief that superior sexual satisfaction is attainable without having affection for one's partner; belief that marriage is sexually confining; and belief that raising children and having a family is an unattractive prospect.[60]

2. "To add insult to injury, many wives are directly or indirectly blamed for their husband's pornography use by her spouse, family, or confidant. Many women I have worked with clinically describe stinging insinuations that the marriage must be unsatisfying, that she has 'let herself go' and is no longer as physically attractive as she once was, that she is closed-minded to new sexual experiences, or that she is overly focused on her children and not attending to her husband's needs. Too often the woman's experience of the

marital relationship and the historical context of his pornography habit become conveniently dismissed as irrelevant by those seeking to assign blame to her."[61]

3. Among attorneys at the November 2002 meeting of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, 62 percent said the Internet had been a significant factor in divorces they had handled during that year. Of those cases, 56 percent involved one person having an obsessive interest in Internet porn.[62]

4. In a study of wives of sex addicts for whom pornography use was an issue in their relationship with their spouses, 68.18 percent had experienced a form of isolation (emotional, spiritual, physical, or social) during the course of dealing with the problem.[63] "What was interesting was that many of the women reported having strong networks of support and family ties, but still described being isolated due to the shameful nature of this particular problem. This suggests women who are high-functioning and well-supported in other areas of life may still be at risk for isolation, delayed help-seeking behavior, and/or prolonged psychological struggle because the problem is so shaming and public awareness of it is in its infancy. In addition, isolation can put women at risk for heightened psychological stress and turmoil if they are used to receiving support in other areas of life, thereby making this population more vulnerable overall."[64]

5. Many women who learn of a partner's compulsive pornography use or other sexual addictions experience psychological effects, such as fatigue, changes in appetite and libido, and other signs of anxiety and depression, such as suicidal tendencies.[65]

6. A study that looked at how couples were impacted by cybersex addiction found cybersex addiction to be a major contributing factor to separation and divorce among affected couples. While several online sexual activities were listed in the study, pornography use was involved in every case.[66]

7. A study of 100 women who were or had been in relationships with male pornography users found that women in married relationships commonly view Internet pornography consumption as a substantial threat to the marriage. Their distress increased according to how frequent they believed their husband's online sexual activities were, and their feelings were not

significantly influenced by religious beliefs.[67]

8. Marriages in which one partner has a pornography problem or sexual compulsion are commonly plagued by problems with diminished intimacy and sensitivity, anxiety, secrecy, isolation, relationship dysfunction, and decreased financial security due to the risk of job loss or related debts.[68]

9. Adult exposure to pornography is associated with greater acceptance of having affairs for married individuals.[69]

10. In a study that examined marital rape, research found that there was a correlation between pornography use and the most sadistic marital rapes.[70]

Porn and Adolescence

1. Adolescents report that pornography influences adolescent sexual behavior.[71]

2. It's easier for someone to recover from having his sexual tastes altered when those altered tastes were acquired as an adult than it is for someone who acquired problematic sexual tastes during his critical periods of development in youth and adolescence.[72]

3. A study of Greek youth found that adolescents exposed to pornography may develop "unrealistic attitudes about sex and misleading attitudes toward relationships".[73]

4. Five studies conducted on Swedish youth found that young men who regularly consume pornography are more likely to have had anal intercourse with a girl and to have tried acts seen in pornography, and that girls who have seen pornography are more likely to have had anal sex. Most of the young women in the studies did not enjoy anal intercourse and did not want to do it again.[74]

5. A study that looked at middle-school youth found that exposure to pornography predicted perpetration of sexual harassment in boys, more permissive sexual norms, engaging in oral sex, and engaging in intercourse in high school.[75]

6. Longitudinal studies have linked heavy exposure to sexual mainstream media with earlier sexual activity,[76] earlier coital behavior,[77] and increased risk for unplanned pregnancy[78] and sexually transmitted disease.[79]

7. A 2014 study in Australia conducted by the Burnet Institute's Centre for Population Health found that weekly porn use was significantly associated with early sexual behavior, inconsistent condom use, sexting, and anal sex.[80]

8. "Not only younger children, but even young teenagers are generally not sophisticated enough to differentiate between fantasy and reality. They learn direct lessons from pornography, with no filter, and with no concept of exaggeration, irony, or affect. They learn what women supposedly look like, how they should act, and what they are supposed to do. They learn what women 'want' and how men can give it to them. Watching pornography, boys and girls learn that women always want sex and that sex is divorced from relationships. They learn that men can have whomever they want and that women will respond the way men want them to. They learn that anal sex is the norm and instant female orgasm is to be expected. And they absorb these lessons avidly, emulating people they perceive to be role models."[81]

9. "It's sad that boys who are initiated to sex through these images become indoctrinated in a way that can potentially stay with them for the rest of their lives. . . . Boys learn that you have sex in spite of your feelings, not because of your feelings. Meanwhile, girls are taught that you don't have intimacy without relationships."[82]

10. "Porn shuts down a boy's natural feeling, as it places little value on intimacy, empathy or respect of partners in pornographic material. A growing body of research also shows that viewing porn is likely to make boys more sexually aggressive, to do whatever they feel they can get away with, and to want to act out what they have seen."[83]

APPENDIX 2

Resources for Individuals, Spouses, and Parents

The following list of resources is divided into four sections: (1) resources for individuals seeking help with their porn addiction, (2) resources for the spouses of those who have a porn addiction, (3) resources for parents who want to protect their children from pornography, and (4) resources for those seeking more education about the negative impact of pornography.

For Individuals Seeking Help

Books

Delivered: True Stories of Men and Women Who Turned from Porn to Purity by Matt Fradd *Victory: A Guide for Overcoming Pornography Addiction* by Matt Fradd and Mark Hart *Treating Pornography Addiction: Essential Tools for Recovery* by Dr. Kevin B. Skinner

Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography by Peter C. Kleponis *Fortify: A Step toward Recovery* by Fight the New Drug *Don't Call It Love: Recovery from Sexual Addiction* by Patrick Carnes *The Porn Trap: The Essential Guide to Overcoming Problems Caused by Pornography* by Wendy and Larry Maltz *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction* by Patrick Carnes

No Stones: Women Redeemed from Sexual Addiction by Marnie C. Ferree

Online Resources

Integrity Restored (*integrityrestored.com*) Integrity Restored provides education, encouragement, and resources to break free from pornography, heal relationships, and assist parents in preventing and responding to pornography exposure, which is so devastating in the lives of our children.

The Porn Effect (*theporneffect.com*) This Catholic site for teens and young adults exposes the reality behind the fantasy of pornography and equips teens and adults to find freedom from it.

NoFap (*nofap.com*)

This comprehensive community-based porn-recovery website helps its users connect with a supportive community of individuals determined to quit porn use and free themselves from compulsive sexual behaviors.

Beggars Daughter (*beggarsdaughter.com*) This blog offers resources to support Christian women fighting their sexual addiction.

Dirty Girls Ministries (*dirtygirlsministries.com*) Dirty Girl Ministries offers online recovery groups, an online community, accountability, and a coaching / consulting network for churches and individual women.

IITAP: International Institute for Trauma and Addiction Professionals (*iitap.com*) This national database of certified sex-addiction therapists can help both those who struggle and their partners.

Catholic Therapist Finder (*catholictherapists.com*) CatholicTherapists.com offers a referral base of qualified Catholic therapists who faithfully adhere to Church teaching. The site also offers helpful articles, books, and audio resources.

Addo Recovery (*addorecovery.com*) Addo Recovery offers online addiction therapy programs as well as individual online and in-person therapy and specializes in betrayal trauma.

LifeStar (*lifestarnetwork.com*) Through an innovative and proven three-phase treatment program, this intensive outpatient group-therapy approach gives participants the resources, support, and structure they need to experience a successful recovery from the damaging effects of pornography and sexually compulsive behaviors. LifeStar offers treatment programs in nearly forty cities across the United States and Canada.

For Spouses Seeking Help

Books

Restored: True Stories of Love and Trust after Porn by Matt and Cameron Fradd

What Can I Do about Me? by Rhyll Anne Croshaw

When Your Husband Is Addicted to Pornography: Healing Your Wounded Heart by Vicki Tiede

Partners: Healing from His Addiction by Doug Weiss

Intimate Treason: Healing the Trauma for Partners Confronting Sex Addiction by Claudia Black and Cara Tripodi *Your Sexually Addicted Spouse: How Partners Can Cope and Heal* by Barbara Steffens and Marsha Means *Shattered Vows: Hope and Healing for Women Who Have Been Sexually Betrayed* by Debra Laaser *Online Resources*

Bloom (*bloomforwomen.com*) Bloom offers online therapy programs as well as individual online and in-person therapy for those dealing specifically with betrayal trauma.

The Togetherness Project (*togethernessproject.org*)

This site offers women's conferences, local groups, and online forums full of inspirational messages and the unique opportunity to connect with other women who are seeking understanding and a place to be understood.

S-Anon (*sanon.org*)

S-Anon is a recovery program for men and women whose lives have been affected by someone else's compulsive sexual behavior. It is based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions) adapted, with permission, for couples recovering from sex addiction.

Integrity Restored (*integrityrestored.com*) This site has a whole section dedicated to spouses with some very helpful content.

For Parents Seeking Help

Books

Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn Proofing Today's Young Kids by Kristen A. Jenson and Gail Poyner *The Joyful Mysteries of Life* by Catherine and Bernard Scherrer

30 Days of Sex Talks: Empowering Your Child with Knowledge of Sexual Intimacy (volumes 1-3) *The Story of Me: God's Design for Sex* (volume 1) by Brenna Jones and Stan Jones

Before I Was Born: God's Design for Sex (volume 2) by Carolyn Nystrom

Online Resources

Educate and Empower Kids (*educateempowerkids.org*) This site helps parents create an environment to make these topics safe to discuss and empowers parents with talking points and communication strategies. Its regularly updated news section keeps parents abreast of current events and dangers.

Porn Proof Kids Blog (*pornproofkids.com*) Managed by the award-winning authors of *Good Pictures Bad Pictures*, this blog has frequent updates on how to start conversations with your children on healthy sexuality and how to build trust and keep the conversation going.

Teen Safe (*teensafe.com*)

This tool allows parents to monitor their children's texts, calls, social media, location, and more. The blog has helpful information about many of the dangers they face in the digital world.

Covenant Eyes (*covenanteyes.com*) This is the best filtering and accountability software on the web. With Covenant Eyes you can use the filter component, the accountability component, or both. By using both, you will not only block pornographic sites, but you will also receive a comprehensive report each week telling you which sites were blocked, when the visit was attempted, and what search terms were used to get there.

For Those Seeking Further Education

Books

Pornified: How Pornography Is Damaging Our Lives, Our Relationships, and Our Families by Pamela Paul *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality* by Gail Dines

Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity by Robert Jensen

The Drug of the New Millennium: The Brain Science behind Internet Pornography by Mark B. Kastleman *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* by William M. Struthers

What's the Big Deal about Pornography? A Guide for the Internet Generation by Jill C. Manning *Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction* by Gary Wilson

Online Resources

Many of the sites listed above are great resources to learn about the negative effects of pornography. Here are some more: *Fight the New Drug* (*fightthenewdrug.com*) This organization targets teens and young adults and provides clear education, tools, and resources to help individuals avoid and overcome pornography addiction.

Your Brain on Porn (*yourbrainonporn.com*) This site will help you understand exactly how today's extreme Internet porn can alter the brain. The site grew out of a decade of research analysis on the effects of sex on the brain and six years of listening to recovering porn addicts.

Shelley Lubben official website (*shelleylubben.com*) Shelly Lubben is a former porn star who is dedicated to reaching out to adult industry workers, offering emotional, financial, and transitional support. This site offers education and resources to victims of sex trafficking. It includes many firsthand accounts of former porn performers. Some of the language is very graphic.

National Center on Sexual Exploitation (*endsexualexploitation.org*) Founded in 1962, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation is the leading national organization opposing pornography by highlighting the links to sex trafficking, violence against women, child abuse, addiction, and more. NCSE works to expose the seamless connection between all forms of sexual exploitation.

APPENDIX 3

Brain Studies on Porn Users

by Gary Wilson*

This appendix lists all the studies assessing the brain structure and functioning of Internet porn users. At the writing of this book, every study offers support for the porn-addiction model (no studies falsify the porn-addiction model). The results of these thirty neurological studies (and upcoming studies) are consistent with more than 180 Internet-addiction brain studies, many of which also include Internet porn use. All support the premise that Internet porn use can cause addiction-related brain changes, as do ten recent neuroscience-based reviews of the literature:

1. *Neuroscience of Internet Pornography Addiction: A Review and Update* (2015). This is a thorough review of the neuroscience literature related to Internet addiction subtypes, with special focus on Internet porn addiction. The review also critiques two recent headline-grabbing EEG studies that purport to have "debunked" porn addiction.[1]

2. *Sex Addiction as a Disease: Evidence for Assessment, Diagnosis, and Response to Critics* (2015). This provides a chart that takes on specific criticisms of porn / sex addiction, offering citations that counter them.[2]

3. *Neurobiology of Compulsive Sexual Behavior: Emerging Science* (2016).

> Given some similarities between CSB and drug addictions, interventions effective for addictions may hold promise for CSB, thus providing insight into future research directions to investigate this possibility directly.[3]

4. *Should Compulsive Sexual Behavior Be Considered an Addiction*? (2016).

> Overlapping features exist between CSB and substance use disorders. Common neurotransmitter systems may contribute to CSB and substance use disorders, and recent neuroimaging studies highlight similarities relating to craving and attentional biases. Similar pharmacological and

psychotherapeutic treatments may be applicable to CSB and substance addictions.[4]

5. *Neurobiological Basis of Hypersexuality* (2016).

> Taken together, the evidence seems to imply that alterations in the frontal lobe, amygdala, hippocampus, hypothalamus, septum, and brain regions that process reward play a prominent role in the emergence of hypersexuality. Genetic studies and neuropharmacological treatment approaches point at an involvement of the dopaminergic system.[5]

6. *Compulsive Sexual Behaviour as a Behavioural Addiction: The Impact of the Internet and Other Issues* (2016). This states that "more emphasis is needed on the characteristics of the internet as these may facilitate problematic sexual behaviour," and that "clinical evidence from those who help and treat such individuals should be given greater credence by the psychiatric community".[6]

7. *Cybersex Addiction* (2015).

> In recent articles, cybersex addiction is considered a specific type of Internet addiction. Some current studies investigated parallels between cybersex addiction and other behavioral addictions, such as Internet Gaming Disorder. Cue-reactivity and craving are considered to play a major role in cybersex addiction. Neuroimaging studies support the assumption of meaningful commonalities between cybersex addiction and other behavioral addictions as well as substance dependency.[7]

8. *Searching for Clarity in Muddy Water: Future Considerations for Classifying Compulsive Sexual Behavior as an Addiction* (2016).

> We recently considered evidence for classifying compulsive sexual behavior (CSB) as a non-substance (behavioral) addiction. Our review found that CSB shared clinical, neurobiological and phenomenological parallels with substance-use disorders. Although the American Psychiatric Association rejected hypersexual disorder from DSM-5, a diagnosis of CSB (excessive sex drive) can be made using ICD-10. CSB is also being considered by ICD-11.[8]

9. *Is Internet Pornography Causing Sexual Dysfunctions? A Review with Clinical Reports* (2016). This is an extensive review of the literature related to porn-induced sexual problems. Involving seven U.S. Navy doctors and Gary Wilson, the review provides the latest data revealing a tremendous rise in youthful sexual problems. It also reviews the neurological studies related to porn addiction and sexual conditioning via Internet porn. The doctors provide three clinical reports of men who developed porn-induced sexual dysfunctions. A second 2016 paper by Gary Wilson discusses the importance of studying the effects of porn by having subjects abstain from

porn use: “Eliminate Chronic Internet Pornography Use to Reveal Its Effects” (2016).[9]

10. *Integrating Psychological and Neurobiological Considerations regarding the Development and Maintenance of Specific Internet-Use Disorders: An Interaction of Person-Affect-Cognition-Execution Model* (2016). This is a review of the mechanisms underlying the development and maintenance of specific Internet-use disorders, including “Internet-pornography-viewing disorder”. The authors suggest that pornography addiction (and cybersex addiction) be classified as Internet-use disorders and placed with other behavioral addictions under substance-use disorders as addictive behaviors.[10]

Brain Studies (fMRI, MRI, EEG, neuroendocrine)

1. *Brain Structure and Functional Connectivity Associated with Pornography Consumption: The Brain on Porn* (2014). This Max Planck Institute fMRI study found less gray matter in the reward system (dorsal striatum) correlating with the amount of porn consumed. It also found that more porn use correlated with less reward-circuit activation while briefly viewing sexual photos. Researchers believed their findings indicated desensitization, and possibly tolerance, which is the need for greater stimulation to achieve the same high. The study also reported that more porn viewing was linked to poorer connections between the reward circuit and the prefrontal cortex —a common addiction-related brain change.[11]

2. *Neural Correlates of Sexual Cue Reactivity in Individuals with and without Compulsive Sexual Behaviours* (2014). The first in a series of Cambridge University studies found the same brain activity pattern in porn addicts (compulsive-sexual-behavior [CSB] subjects) as seen in drug addicts and alcoholics. It also found that porn addicts fit the accepted addiction model of wanting “it” more, but *not* liking “it” more. The researchers also reported that 60 percent of subjects (average age twenty-five) had difficulty achieving erections or arousal with real partners yet could achieve erections with porn.[12]

3. *Enhanced Attentional Bias towards Sexually Explicit Cues in Individuals with and without Compulsive Sexual Behaviours* (2014). This second Cambridge

University study reported:

> Our findings of enhanced attentional bias. . . suggest possible overlaps with enhanced attentional bias observed in studies of drug cues in disorders of addictions. These findings converge with recent findings of neural reactivity to sexually explicit cues in [porn addicts] in a network similar to that implicated in drug-cue-reactivity studies and provide support for incentive motivation theories of addiction underlying the aberrant response to sexual cues in [porn addicts].[13]

4. *Novelty, Conditioning and Attentional Bias to Sexual Rewards* (2015). This Cambridge University fMRI found that, compared with those in the control group, porn addicts preferred sexual novelty and conditioned cues associated porn. However, the brains of porn addicts habituated faster to sexual images. Since novelty preference wasn't preexisting, porn addiction drives novelty-seeking in an attempt to overcome habituation and desensitization.[14]

5. *Neural Substrates of Sexual Desire in Individuals with Problematic Hypersexual Behavior* (2015). This Korean fMRI study replicates other brain studies on porn users. Like the Cambridge University studies, it found cue-induced brain-activation patterns in sex addicts that mirrored the patterns of drug addicts. In line with several German studies, it found alterations in the prefrontal cortex that match the changes observed in drug addicts. What's new is that the findings perfectly matched the prefrontal cortex activation patterns observed in drug addicts: greater cue-reactivity to sexual images, yet inhibited response to other normal stimuli.[15]

6. *Sexual Desire, Not Hypersexuality, Is Related to Neurophysiological Responses Elicited by Sexual Images* (2013). This EEG study was touted in the media as evidence *against* the existence of porn / sex addiction. Not so. This SPAN Lab study, like study number 7 below, actually lends support to the existence of both porn addiction and porn use downregulating sexual desire. How so? The study reported higher EEG readings (relative to neutral pictures) when subjects were briefly exposed to pornographic photos. Studies consistently show that an elevated P300 occurs when addicts are exposed to cues (such as images) related to their addiction. The findings are uninterpretable, however, due to methodological flaws: (i) the study had no control group for comparison; (2) subjects were heterogeneous (males, females, nonheterosexuals); (3) subjects were not screened for mental disorders or addictions; (4) questionnaires were not validated for porn addiction. In line with the Cambridge University brain-scan studies, this

EEG study reported greater cue-reactivity to porn correlated with less desire for partnered sex. To put another way: individuals with greater brain activation to porn would rather masturbate to porn than have sex with a real person. Study spokesman Nicole Prause claimed that porn users merely had "high libido", yet the results of the study say something quite different.[16]

7. *Modulation of Late Positive Potentials by Sexual Images in Problem Users and Controls Inconsistent with "Porn Addiction"* (2015). Another SPAN Lab EEG (brainwave) study comparing the 2013 subjects from the previously cited study to an actual control group (yet it suffered from the same methodological flaws named above). The results: compared with controls, "individuals experiencing problems regulating their porn viewing" had *lower* brain responses to one-second exposure to photos of vanilla porn. The lead author, Nicole Prause, claims these results "debunk porn addiction". What legitimate scientist would claim that their lone anomalous study has debunked an entire field of study? In reality, the findings of Prause *et al.* 2015 align perfectly with Kühn and Gallinat 2014 (study number 1 in this list), which found that more porn use correlated with less brain activation in response to pictures of vanilla porn. Prause's findings also align with Banca *et al.* 2015 (study number 4 in this list). Moreover, another EEG study found that greater porn use in women correlated with less brain activation to porn. Lower EEG readings mean that subjects are paying less attention to the pictures. Put simply, frequent porn users were desensitized to static images of vanilla porn. They were bored (habituated or desensitized).[17]

8. *HPA Axis Dysregulation in Men with Hypersexual Disorder* (2015). The hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis is the central player in our stress response. Addictions alter the brain's stress circuits, leading to a dysfunctional HPA axis. This study on sex addicts (hypersexuals) found altered stress responses that mirror such responses in drug addiction.[18]

9. *Compulsive Sexual Behavior: Prefrontal and Limbic Volume and Interactions* (2016). Compared to healthy controls, CSB subjects (porn addicts) had increased left amygdala volume and reduced functional connectivity between the amygdala and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. Reduced functional connectivity between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex aligns with substance addictions. It is thought that poorer connectivity diminishes the prefrontal cortex's control over a user's impulse to engage in

the addictive behavior. This study suggests that drug toxicity may lead to less gray matter and thus reduced amygdala volume in drug addicts. The amygdala is consistently active during porn viewing, especially during initial exposure to a sexual cue. Perhaps the constant *sexual* novelty and searching and seeking leads to a unique effect on the amygdala in compulsive porn users. Alternatively, years of porn addiction and severe negative consequences is very stressful—and chronic social stress is related to *increased* amygdala volume. Study number 8 in this list found that "sex addicts" have an over-active stress system. Could the chronic stress related to porn / sex addiction, along with factors that make sex unique, lead to greater amygdala volume?[19]

10. *Can Pornography Be Addictive? An fMRI Study of Men Seeking Treatment for Problematic Pornography Use* (2016).

    Men with and without problematic porn sue (PPU) differed in brain reactions to cues predicting erotic pictures, but not in reactions to erotic pictures themselves, consistent with the incentive salience theory of addictions. This brain activation was accompanied by increased behavioral motivation to view erotic images (higher "wanting"). Ventral striatal reactivity for cues predicting erotic pictures was significantly related to the severity of PPU, amount of pornography use per week and number of weekly masturbations. Our findings suggest that like in substance-use and gambling disorders the neural and behavioral mechanisms linked to anticipatory processing of cues relate importantly to clinically relevant features of PPU. These findings suggest that PPU may represent a behavioral addiction and that interventions helpful in targeting behavioral and substance addictions warrant consideration for adaptation and use in helping men with PPU.[20]

11. *Ventral Striatum Activity When Watching Preferred Pornographic Pictures Is Correlated with Symptoms of Internet Pornography Addiction* (2016). This study found that (1) reward-center (ventral-striatum) activity was higher for preferred pornographic pictures and that (2) ventral-striatum reactivity correlated with the Internet sex-addiction score. Both findings indicate sensitization and align with the addiction model. The authors state that the "neural basis of Internet pornography addiction is comparable to other addictions."[21]

12. *Altered Appetitive Conditioning and Neural Connectivity in Subjects with Compulsive Sexual Behavior* (2016). This German fMRI study replicated two major findings from Voon *et al.* 2014 (study number 2 in this list) and Kühn and Gallinat 2014 (study number 1 in this list). One finding is that the neural correlates of appetitive conditioning and neural connectivity were altered in the CSB group. According to the researchers, the first alteration

—heightened amygdala activation—might reflect facilitated conditioning (greater "wiring" to previously neutral cues predicting porn images). The second alteration—decreased connectivity between the ventral striatum and the prefrontal cortex—could be a marker for impaired ability to control impulses. Said the researchers, "These [alterations] are in line with other studies investigating the neural correlates of addiction disorders and impulse control deficits." The findings of greater amygdalar activation to cues (sensitization) and decreased connectivity between the reward center and the prefrontal cortex (hypofrontality) are two of the major brain changes seen in substance addiction. In addition, three of the twenty compulsive porn users suffered from "orgasmic-erection disorder".[22]

13. *Compulsivity across the Pathological Misuse of Drug and Non-drug Rewards* (2016). This Cambridge University study compared aspects of compulsivity in alcoholics, binge-eaters, video-game addicts, and porn addicts (CSB).

    CSB subjects were faster to [learn] from rewards in the acquisition phase compared to healthy volunteers and were more likely to perseverate or stay after either a loss or a win in the Reward condition. These findings converge with our previous findings of enhanced preference for stimuli conditioned to either sexual or monetary outcomes, overall suggesting enhanced sensitivity to rewards.[23]

14. *Preliminary Investigation of the Impulsive and Neuro-anatomical Characteristics of Compulsive Sexual Behavior* (2009). This study reported more impulsive behavior in a Go-NoGo task in sex addicts (hypersexuals) compared to control participants. Brain scans revealed that sex addicts had greater disorganized prefrontal cortex white matter. This finding is consistent with hypofrontality, a hallmark of addiction.[24]

Together these brain studies found the following:

1. Subjects showed the three major addiction-related brain changes: sensitization, desensitization, and hypofrontality.

2. More porn use correlated with less gray matter in the reward circuit (dorsal striatum).

3. More porn use correlated with less reward-circuit activation when subjects briefly viewed sexual images.

4. More porn use correlated with disrupted neural connections between the reward circuit and prefrontal cortex.

5. Addicts had greater prefrontal activity to sexual cues, but less brain activity to normal stimuli (this matches drug addiction).

6. Sixty percent of compulsive porn addicts in one study experienced ED or low libido with partners, but not with porn: all stated that Internet porn use caused their ED or low libido.

7. Enhanced attentional bias was comparable to that of drug users. This indicates sensitization (a product of DeltaFosb).

8. Greater desire and craving for porn, but not greater liking, aligns with the accepted model of addiction—incentive sensitization.

9. Porn addicts have greater preference for sexual novelty yet their brains habituated faster to sexual images. Not preexisting.

10. The younger the porn users, the greater the cue-induced reactivity in the reward center.

11. EEG (P300) readings were higher when porn users were exposed to porn cues (which occurs in other addictions).

12. Less desire for sex with a person correlating with greater cue-reactivity to porn images.

13. More porn use correlated with lower LPP amplitude when subjects briefly viewed sexual photos, indicating habituation or desensitization.

14. Dysfunctional HPA axis reflects altered brain-stress circuits, which occurs in drug addictions (and greater amygdala volume, which is associated with chronic social stress).

Neuropsychological Studies on Porn Users

1. *Watching Pornographic Pictures on the Internet: Role of Sexual Arousal Ratings and Psychological-Psychiatric Symptoms for Using Internet Sex*

Sites Excessively (2011).

Results indicate that self-reported problems in daily life linked to online sexual activities were predicted by subjective sexual arousal ratings of the pornographic material, global severity of psychological symptoms, and the number of sex applications used when being on Internet sex sites in daily life, while the time spent on Internet sex sites (minutes per day) did not significantly contribute to explanation of variance in IATsex score. We see some parallels between cognitive and brain mechanisms potentially contributing to the maintenance of excessive cybersex and those described for individuals with substance dependence.[25]

2. *Pornographic Picture Processing Interferes with Working Memory Performance* (2013).

Some individuals report problems during and after Internet sex engagement, such as missing sleep and forgetting appointments, which are associated with negative life consequences. One mechanism potentially leading to these kinds of problems is that sexual arousal during Internet sex might interfere with working memory (WM) capacity, resulting in a neglect of relevant environmental information and therefore disadvantageous decision making. Results revealed worse WM performance in the pornographic picture condition of the 4-back task compared with the three remaining picture conditions. Findings are discussed with respect to Internet addiction because WM interference by addiction-related cues is well known from substance dependencies.[26]

3. *Sexual Picture Processing Interferes with Decision-Making Under Ambiguity* (2013).

Decision-making performance was worse when sexual pictures were associated with disadvantageous card decks compared to performance when the sexual pictures were linked to the advantageous decks. Subjective sexual arousal moderated the relationship between task condition and decision-making performance. This study emphasized that sexual arousal interfered with decision-making, which may explain why some individuals experience negative consequences in the context of cybersex use.[27]

4. *Cybersex Addiction: Experienced Sexual Arousal When Watching Pornography and Not Real-Life Sexual Contacts Makes the Difference* (2013).

The results show that indicators of sexual arousal and craving to Internet pornographic cues predicted tendencies towards cybersex addiction in the first study. Moreover, it was shown that problematic cybersex users report greater sexual arousal and craving reactions resulting from pornographic cue presentation. In both studies, the number and the quality with real-life sexual contacts were not associated to cybersex addiction. The results support the gratification hypothesis, which assumes reinforcement, learning mechanisms, and craving to be relevant processes in the development and maintenance of cybersex addiction. Poor or unsatisfying sexual real life contacts cannot sufficiently explain cybersex addiction.[28]

5. *Cybersex Addiction in Heterosexual Female Users of Internet Pornography Can Be Explained by Gratification Hypothesis* (2014).

> Results indicated that Internet porn users rated pornographic pictures as more arousing and reported greater craving due to pornographic picture presentation compared with non-users. Moreover, craving, sexual arousal rating of pictures, sensitivity to sexual excitation, problematic sexual behavior, and severity of psychological symptoms predicted tendencies toward cybersex addiction in porn users. Being in a relationship, number of sexual contacts, satisfaction with sexual contacts, and use of interactive cybersex were not associated with cybersex addiction.[29]

6. *Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Considerations on Factors Contributing to Cybersex Addiction from a Cognitive Behavioral View* (2014).

> Previous work suggests that some individuals might be vulnerable to CA, while positive reinforcement and cue-reactivity are considered to be core mechanisms of CA development. In this study, 155 heterosexual males rated 100 pornographic pictures and indicated their increase of sexual arousal. Moreover, tendencies towards CA, sensitivity to sexual excitation, and dysfunctional use of sex in general were assessed. The results of the study show that there are factors of vulnerability to CA and provide evidence for the role of sexual gratification and dysfunctional coping in the development of CA.[30]

7. *Prefrontal Control and Internet Addiction: A Theoretical Model and Review of Neuropsychological and Neuroimaging Findings* (2015).

> Consistent with this, results from functional neuroimaging and other neuropsychological studies demonstrate that cue-reactivity, craving, and decision making are important concepts for understanding Internet addiction. The findings on reductions in executive control are consistent with other behavioral addictions, such as pathological gambling. They also emphasize the classification of the phenomenon as an addiction, because there are also several similarities with findings in substance dependency. Moreover, the results of the current study are comparable to findings from substance dependency research and emphasize analogies between cybersex addiction and substance dependencies or other behavioral addictions.[31]

8. *Implicit Associations in Cybersex Addiction: Adaption of an Implicit Association Test with Pornographic Pictures* (2015).

> Recent studies show similarities between cybersex addiction and substance dependencies and argue to classify cybersex addiction as a behavioral addiction. In substance dependency, implicit associations are known to play a crucial role. Results show positive relationships between implicit associations of pornographic pictures with positive emotions and tendencies towards cybersex addiction, problematic sexual behavior, sensitivity towards sexual excitation as well as subjective craving.[32]

9. *Symptoms of Cybersex Addiction Can Be Linked to Both Approaching and Avoiding Pornographic Stimuli: Results from an Analog Sample of Regular*

Cybersex Users (2015).

Results showed that individuals with tendencies toward cybersex addiction tended to either approach or avoid pornographic stimuli. Additionally, moderated regression analyses revealed that individuals with high sexual excitation and problematic sexual behavior who showed high approach / avoidance tendencies, reported higher symptoms of cybersex addiction. Analogous to substance dependencies, results suggest that both approach and avoidance tendencies might play a role in cybersex addiction.[33]

10. *Getting Stuck with Pornography? Overuse or Neglect of Cybersex Cues in a Multitasking Situation Is Related to Symptoms of Cybersex Addiction* (2015).

Individuals with tendencies towards cybersex addiction seem to have either an inclination to avoid or to approach the pornographic material, as discussed in motivational models of addiction. The results of the current study point towards a role of executive control functions, i.e., functions mediated by the prefrontal cortex, for the development and maintenance of problematic cybersex use (as suggested by Brand et al., 2014). Particularly a reduced ability to monitor consumption and to switch between pornographic material and other contents in a goal adequate manner may be one mechanism in the development and maintenance of cybersex addiction.[34]

11. *Trading Later Rewards for Current Pleasure: Pornography Consumption and Delay Discounting* (2015).

Study 1: Participants completed a pornography use questionnaire and a delay discounting task at Time 1 and then again four weeks later. Participants reporting higher initial pornography use demonstrated a higher delay discounting rate at Time 2, controlling for initial delay discounting. Study 2: Participants who abstained from pornography use demonstrated lower delay discounting than participants who abstained from their favorite food. The finding suggests that Internet pornography is a sexual reward that contributes to delay discounting differently than other natural rewards. It is therefore important to treat pornography as a unique stimulus in reward, impulsivity, and addiction studies and to apply this accordingly in individual as well as relational treatment.[35]

12. *Sexual Excitability and Dysfunctional Coping Determine Cybersex Addiction in Homosexual Males* (2015).

Recent findings have demonstrated an association between CyberSex Addiction (CA) severity and indicators of sexual excitability, and that coping by sexual behaviors mediated the relationship between sexual excitability and CA symptoms. The aim of this study was to test this mediation in a sample of homosexual males. Questionnaires assessed symptoms of CA, sensitivity to sexual excitation, pornography use motivation, problematic sexual behavior, psychological symptoms, and sexual behaviors in real life and online. Moreover, participants viewed pornographic videos and indicated their sexual arousal before and after the video presentation. Results showed strong correlations between CA symptoms and indicators of sexual arousal and sexual excitability, coping by sexual behaviors, and psychological symptoms. CA was not associated with offline sexual behaviors and weekly cybersex use time. Coping by sexual behaviors partially mediated the

relationship between sexual excitability and CA. The results are comparable with those reported for heterosexual males and females in previous studies and are discussed against the background of theoretical assumptions of CA, which highlight the role of positive and negative reinforcement due to cybersex use.[36]

13. *Subjective Craving for Pornography and Associative Learning Predict Tendencies Towards Cybersex Addiction in a Sample of Regular Cybersex Users* (2016).

    There is no consensus regarding the diagnostic criteria of cybersex addiction. Some approaches postulate similarities to substance dependencies, for which associative learning is a crucial mechanism. In this study, 86 heterosexual males completed a Standard Pavlovian to Instrumental Transfer Task modified with pornographic pictures to investigate associative learning in cybersex addiction. Additionally, subjective craving due to watching pornographic pictures and tendencies towards cybersex addiction were assessed. Results showed an effect of subjective craving on tendencies towards cybersex addiction, moderated by associative learning. Overall, these findings point towards a crucial role of associative learning for the development of cybersex addiction, while providing further empirical evidence for similarities between substance dependencies and cybersex addiction.[37]

14. *Exploring the Relationship between Sexual Compulsivity and Attentional Bias to Sex-Related Words in a Cohort of Sexually Active Individuals* (2016). This study replicates the findings of the 2014 Cambridge University study (see study number 2 in the Brain Studies list above), which compared the attentional bias of porn addicts to healthy controls. The new study differs: rather than comparing porn addicts to controls, the new study correlated scores on a sex-addiction questionnaire to the results of a task-assessing attentional bias (explanation of attentional bias). The study described two key results: (1) Higher sexual compulsivity scores correlated with greater interference (increased distraction) during the attentional bias task. This aligns with substance-abuse studies. (2) Among those scoring high on sexual addiction, fewer years of sexual experience were related to greater attentional bias. The authors concluded that this result could indicate that more years of “compulsive sexual activity” lead to greater habituation or a general numbing of the pleasure response (desensitization). The following is an excerpt from the conclusion of the study:

    One possible explanation for these results is that as a sexually compulsive individual engages in more compulsive behaviour, an associated arousal template develops and that over time, more extreme behaviour is required for the same level of arousal to be realised. It is further argued that as an individual engages in more compulsive behaviour, neuropathways become desensitized to more “normalized” sexual stimuli or images and individuals turn to more “extreme” stimuli to realise the arousal desired.[38]

15. *Mood Changes after Watching Pornography on the Internet Are Linked to Symptoms of Internet-Pornography-Viewing Disorder* (2016).

> The main results of the study are that tendencies towards Internet Pornography Disorder (IPD) were associated negatively with feeling generally good, awake, and calm as well as positively with perceived stress in daily life and the motivation to use Internet pornography in terms of excitation seeking and emotional avoidance. Furthermore, tendencies towards IPD were negatively related to mood before and after watching Internet pornography as well as an actual increase of good and calm mood. The relationship between tendencies towards IPD and excitement seeking due to Internet-pornography use was moderated by the evaluation of the experienced orgasm's satisfaction. Generally, the results of the study are in line with the hypothesis that IPD is linked to the motivation to find sexual gratification and to avoid or to cope with aversive emotions as well as with the assumption that mood changes following pornography consumption are linked to IPD (Cooper et al., 1999 and Laier and Brand, 2014).[39]

16. *Executive Functioning of Sexually Compulsive and Non-Sexually Compulsive Men before and after Watching an Erotic Video* (2017). Exposure to porn affected executive functioning in men with "compulsive sexual behaviors", but not healthy controls. Poorer executive functioning when exposed to addiction-related cues is a hallmark of substance disorders (indicating both altered prefrontal circuits and sensitization).

> This finding indicates better cognitive flexibility after sexual stimulation by controls compared with sexually compulsive participants. These data support the idea that sexually compulsive men do not to take advantage of the possible learning effect from experience, which could result in better behavior modification. This also could be understood as a lack of a learning effect by the sexually compulsive group when they were sexually stimulated, similar to what happens in the cycle of sexual addiction, which starts with an increasing amount of sexual cognition, followed by the activation of sexual scripts and then orgasm, very often involving exposure to risky situations.[40]

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1. Oxytocin levels in the blood may have little relationship with oxytocin levels in the brain. Brain oxytocin cannot be assessed in humans—only in animals (which involves killing them).
2. Several regions of the brain are affected by oxytocin. Each region controls different functions or behaviors.
3. Many studies show that oxytocin can also cause aggression: its effects depend on the social context.
4. If men were truly bonded, they would watch the same porn star over and over, but this rarely happens. Novelty seeking is the opposite of bonding.
5. Porn addicts are not bonded; they are addicted to novelty seeking.
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Appendix 3

* Gary Wilson is the author of *Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction*. This list of brain studies is from his website www.yourbrainonporn.com and is reprinted with permission. Back to text.

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